A Quarterly of New Literature

ACCENT

J. F. POWERS:
Lions, Harts, Leaping Does

KENNETH BURKE:
Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats

RAINER MARIA RILKE:
Alcestis
Translated by Dudley Fitts

BREWSTER GHISELIN:
Men Together

HARRY SLOCHOWER:
Mann's Latest Novels

ELISEO VIVAS
HAROLD NORSE

MURIEL RUKEYSER
DAVID DAICHES

HOWARD BLAKE
BARBARA HOWES

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AUTUMN, 1943

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HENRY JAMES

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* * *

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RAINER MARIA RILKE (1875-1926), greatest of 20th-century German poets, has been widely translated in the last decade, chiefly by J. B. Leishman in England and M. D. H. Norton in America.

MURIEL RUKEYSER will offer her fourth selection of poems early in 1944.

HARRY SLOCHOWER'S 'Thomas Mann's Joseph Story' is recommended to readers interested in his present article.

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A Christmas Suggestion

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ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

Volume 4, Number 1 Autumn, 1943

HARRY SLOCHOWER:

Mann's Latest Novels —

Tangential Conclusion to the Joseph Story

The Beloved Returns and *The Transposed Heads*, which followed *Joseph in Egypt*, seem at first glance to have no connection with Mann's Joseph myth. The first has been characterized as a tribute to Goethe, and the Hindu legend as a "finger exercise" and rest period made necessary by the exacting labors on the Joseph story.

Now, the conception and execution of these novels fall into the time when Mann continued to work and deliberate on Joseph's final stage. This circumstance recalls the fact that Goethe interspersed his work on *Faust* with other projects—all of which reveal, in some way, Goethe's preoccupation with "the main business" of Faust. Suppose we were to examine Mann's stories for similar threads which he has been "privately" drawing for Joseph's future. Might they not suggest Mann's hesitancies and resistances while he is plotting the finale? Sounded for such clues, these novels do, indeed, appear as the author's twilight ruminations on his "main business," as convergences from distant peripheries towards the center of the Joseph story.

We have traced the way of Jacob and Joseph as that of man's genius. We have seen how their self-assertion, granted them by their blessing, is checked by the world-community of Esau-Laban, by the brothers, and by the land of Egypt. Their genius is pressed to develop self-restraint, to organize its apocalyptic visions in accordance with the demands of social order. Joseph turns from the play of lyrical dream-promises to the work of translating them into practice, from the id-stage of concern with the self to cognizance of the authoritative principle. And, in the supreme ordeal by the temptress Mut, Joseph succeeds in curbing his "natural" strength through consideration of the dual Father-allegiance, Jacob and Potiphar.

The Goethe-Tangent As Historical Analogy

The story of Joseph, following his descent into the Pharaoh's prison, is to take an ascending curve. But where was Mann to find the source for such inspirational direction? He himself was an exile, and all signs of this time (1938-1940) pointed to the continued triumph of Fascism. With the historical present holding the spirit imprisoned, where was the artist to draw from for Joseph's elevation from the prison-pit?

The Goethe novel we interpret as a backward look to history for a prototype and approximation of the Joseph personality, for which Mann's own temporal darkness could not provide the inner persuasion. The subject of Goethe offered Mann an historical analogy to himself and to his theme. More than any other historical figure, Goethe has been Mann's own prototype. Moreover, Goethe himself once planned a drama dealing with Joseph. And, just as Mann has tended to identify himself with the great German, so in *The Beloved Returns* Goethe is likened to Joseph endowed "with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under." While "waiting" for Joseph's visions to take form, Mann invokes the past for a 19th-century foreshadowing. Goethe, by whom Mann himself has been nourished, is resurrected to serve as the "nourisher" of Joseph's future. Mann's regression in *The Beloved Returns* is an invocation to the Mothers of History to give up the son.

Mann shows Goethe at the period of his fullest maturity. He is sixty-seven (approximately Mann's own age at the time the novel was written), at work on the second part of *Faust*, and ready to close the circle by reintegrating his beginnings in the higher phase. To his followers, he is a kind of God-Father, androgynous and complete ("womb and seed"), combining opposites in an all-embracing irony. He is pictured as embodying a divine disinterestedness, "at once absolute love and absolute nihilism and indifference." Goethe appears here as an Absolute. But his public perfection as artist has been gained at the cost of deep private tragedy.

Goethe has attained absolute stature by disallowing himself living participation in events and people. Beneath his Olympian serenity, Mann discloses the searing pain of the human being who has sacrificed his body to art and spirit. Goethe did love. But he never allowed himself to "live out" his love, to marry and have a family. He flirted and kissed. But no children come from kisses. "The making of children," Goethe muses, "is no affair of poetry's." Consummation he achieved only in his art. Here, as in the Joseph story (and, as we shall see, in *The Transposed Heads*), Mann treats sex-fulfillment as an obstruction to the creative stress. Mann's artists remain relatively chaste, and Joseph long resists the temptations of the flesh. Renunciation of the physical increases the tension and thereby spurs man on to *symbolic* fulfillment through artistic and spiritual refraction. This, Mann shows, was the case with Goethe. His fusion of nature and art, of physics and ideality, of "kisses" and "children" was largely in the symbolic sphere. He was adverse to wedlock so as to

enjoy the perpetual honeymoon of poetic ecstasy. He refused to "settle down," so as to allow his spirit to be eternally transformed. The result is a majestic portrait, admired and worshipped by the men who pilgrim to his seat at Weimar. But these see only the mask of the spirit, not the terrible aloneness of the man. Goethe did marry; but Christiane Vulpius never ventured to address the great man with the familiar "thou." He did have a son; but August is shown as a weak echo of his father, an imitator who coarsens, sensualizes and stratifies his qualities. Goethe had a large following; but the Riemers and the Meyers are servants who fawn and bow. In short, Goethe's life failed of the interaction which his work effected. His progeny is more in the character of Thomas Buddenbrook who denies his son, of the faded Peeperkorn, of the eunuch Potiphar, than in that of Joseph destined to become a father of a family, and father to the people of Egypt.

Lotte—the Lotte whom Goethe wooed as a youth—is the representation of the nature-element which Goethe renounced. Where he chose "kisses" and the presentation of the parody of life through art, Lotte chose to give up the lover Goethe for the husband Kestner, to live in orderly "bourgeois" wedlock and become a mother of many children. Her simple nature preferred the stability of organized, sober living to the "might have been" which Goethe's adventurous genius held out to her.

However, this is no simple repetition of the Tonio Kroeger pattern in which the artist is deprived of the blond and blue-eyed ones. Mann's work has taken him through the magic values of enchantment which enriched the personalities of Gustav Aschenbach and Hans Castorp. If art suffers from deprivation of nature, the latter, in becoming conscious, feels the lack of art. If Goethe has missed a wife and marriage, Lotte has missed the honeymoon with the lover. And so, forty-four years after the days of Werther, she undertakes a pilgrimage to Weimar in a somewhat childlike attempt to recapture the poetic past. In a final mythical setting, in a talk carried on amidst the shadows of Goethe's rolling carriage, they reveal to each other their reciprocal incompleteness. Goethe speaks of the hidden agony behind his dignity, of his body-sacrifice that the light might burn: "I am the drunken butterfly that falls to the flame—figure of the eternal sacrifice, body transmuted into soul, and life to spirit." As in *Royal Highness*, renunciation remains the poet's pact with the Muse and life the forbidden garden. The final words, "Peace to your old age," are Lotte's, whispered to him who can now look forward only to the last Antæan compensation, to death, the ultimate transformation of nature into the flame. But the words may as well have been addressed to Lotte who has also come to feel the need of "the other." The dream-nature of this scene suggests an identification of the two characters, with these spoken words applying to either and to both.

The Beloved Returns thus questions the possibility of complete fusion between the spiritual and the physical. Goethe was the genius who, like his Faust, left no offspring. Lotte was nature who produced many child-

ren who remained unknown. It is the story of unfulfillment seen from the distinct perspectives of art and nature. It presents the either-or between the genius and the simple people, the aristocratic individual and the folk, between honeymoon and wedlock. However, now when they are at the end of the holy season of renewal and rejuvenescence, they may hope that in the final "flight into the flame," the sublimation of their individual existence may yet mean their union in the "All-in-One."

The First World Nurse—The Original Analogy

In *The Beloved Returns* Mann goes to specific history for aid in establishing the Joseph-coordinates. The Joseph epic itself stands on the border-line between the legendary and the historical. *The Transposed Heads* regresses to the pre-historical. It is an ever "purer" myth than that of Joseph, for it stands outside of historical time altogether. Mann's Hindu legend is an approach to the Joseph problem from absolute beginnings unencrusted by historical contingencies. It takes place in the land which gave birth to the Mother-tongue from which our Indo-European speech developed. It is the land which, according to legendary tradition, was the site of Paradise. Mann is in quest of the first enactment of the human drama, repeated in more involved forms in later ages. Here, perhaps, may be found the original formula in simple, naked outline before it became obscured by moralistic canons and guilt associations brought by Western religions and civilizations. In this early pattern, there is, as yet, a minimum of "false" consciousness, no fear of punishment in an after-life. For these people know only of one world, the world of Sansara or Appearance. The realm to which the departed went they called Nirvana or Nothing.

As a "plain" summary of human relations, *The Transposed Heads* encompasses the entire gamut of man's way, beginning with his state in paradise, the innocent plane of unity and peace, through his awakening to consciousness, passion and knowledge which split the original oneness and bring divisiveness and war, to the final reintegration by "flight into the flame." In this necessary process, man is fated ever to strive for unification, ever succeeding to a limited extent, and always feeling the insufficiency of both satedness and want. What distinguishes this story of Mann's is that, for the first time, the tragic surd is treated from the vantage point of high comedy, viewed as part of nature's way, and accepted with cheerful sympathy ("heiteres Mitleid").

In this tale Mann transposes the problem of "head" and "body," of genius and organization, of art and business, into an elementary plot involving a woman's desire for simultaneous enjoyment of a lover and a husband. Sita is married to Schridamann with the wise head but unimpressive body. Her marriage only awakens her to the knowledge of lust and, in the the arms of her husband, Sita longs for the lover, for Schridamann's friend Nanda, the youth with the coarser head and the manlier body. When the heads of the two friends are transposed, Sita is happy

in that she now possesses the lover's body as well as the husband's head. In the Hindu legend, this rearrangement makes for their common happiness. Thomas Mann's account diverges from his happy ending. There is bliss at first. But even this "at first" is questionable, and the author suggests that what transpires later makes itself felt from the very beginning. The acquired lover-body becomes the husband-body, and the distant husband-body takes on the qualities of the longed-for lover. Having what she had desired, Sita now desires what she has not.

> Possessing the husband-head on the friend-body, she yearned for the friend-head on the husband-body. And just as certainly would she feel pity and sympathy for the husband-head on the friend-body, nor would she find any peace and satisfaction, the distant husband would ever be the friend whom she loves.

As the mores forbid their all living together, they three agree that their desire for unification can be fulfilled only in their common death.

Together, Schridamann and Nanda combine the wisdom and practicality which Joseph's personality embodies. In the opening paradisial setting, they are united in friendship, finding it inconceivable to live without the other. Their first stage is an innocent male union. They "intrigued each other," by virtue of being perfect complements to each other. This peaceful state is upset by the appearance of the beautiful girl. Sita is the "snake" emerging from the waters bringing to them the fruit from the tree of knowledge and sin, the Eros-element arousing them from the quietude of their existence to a Maya-longing which becomes a longing for absolute beauty and happiness which can be stilled only by death. Through her, the two become divided, differentiated, awakened to the particularity of their sex-beings. She is the "Fall," making for the sin of individuation and their estrangement. But this is only her lower phase, the "customary" sensuous moment leading the spirit astray. (This aspect is also suggested by Mann's play on her name: "Sitte," "sittsam," "sitzen"). For she is also the liberator from appearance, leading out "beyond the darkness of confusion to knowledge and truth." She is the Earth-Spirit in the dual role of awakening matter to consciousness (the Nanda-evolution) and conversely of materializing the spiritual (the Schridamann development). She is "the furrow" through which the two men find their common road, the "All-Mother" and "All-Nourisher" of both the simple and complex who find the meaning of life and death through her. In the attempt to bind to herself the wisdom of Schridamann and the immediacy of Nanda, in her desire for both husband and lover, Sita reenacts Jacob's dual wooing of Leah and Rachel, Mut's effort to hold Joseph while wedded to Potiphar, and Lotte's craving for both her good Kestner and the romantic friend. (Mann subtly "modernizes" Sita's error in putting the heads back. Her error is the truth of her subconscious will.) Sita is finally a foreshadowing of Joseph's attempt to wed his prophetic gifts to the practical business of politics and government. Mut and Lotte failed. Even Jacob soon lost his beloved Rachel. To be sure, the world's goal

is "union between spirit and beauty, a bliss no longer divided but whole and consummate." But the story of Sita, Mann tells us, is "an illustration of the failures and false starts attending the effort to reach the goal." The dream visions, when translated into the actual, become grounded and limited. Hence, "makeshifts, renunciations and resignation are the common lot." Mann's story of the "original" failure is a preview of the later Joseph when the enthusiasm of his lyrical beginnings is stabilized and regulated.

Still, the isolation and difference which Mann's characters suffer constitute a value. For

> differences make for comparisons, comparisons give rise to uneasiness, uneasiness to wonderment, wonderment tends to admiration; and finally admiration turns to a yearning for mutual exchange and unity.

Ultimately, this spells tragedy. Yet, by *knowing* that all peace, harmony and silence are illusions, that man has the power to arouse desire but not to sate it, he can raise himself above the tragic, can even smile at his fate in cheerful sympathy. In *The Beloved Returns* Goethe muses on the high value of the light touch:[1]

> The depths must laugh! Profundity must smile . . . All seriousness springs from death and its reverence for it. But dread of death is despair of the idea—is the stream of life run dry.

Never before has Mann treated a tragic subject with the same equanimity and aloofness. There is a sort of debunking of the tragic through common-sense humor when Nanda calls Schridamann's longing for death after he sees Sita simple "lovesickness," and when the Goddess treats the whole episode in a rough matter-of-fact manner as something entirely normal. At the end this light touch is carried out by the three characters in the non-tragic way in which they decide to die together. What makes all this possible is that the head has now assumed undisputed leadership as the all-important factor in establishing human identity.[2] In the end, "the head decides the value of the body."

The tale has a concrete issue as well. It is the son, the common fruit of the three parents. He is called Samadhi, which Mann translates as "Sammlung." The German term has the double meaning of "collection" and "concentration." Samadhi is near-sighted, and we are led to imagine that this handicap will restrain him from looking as far afield as his parents did. It may also lead him to concentrate on those goals which lie within man's limited periphery.

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1. The reference to this novel is relevant also in the fact that Goethe is shown here as planning a similar theme of transposed heads.
2. By this time, to be sure, the three have tasted all possible combinations of bodily joys and sorrows. The story covers the entire range of love-longing and satiation: there is the state of no desire (the characters' original innocence), onanistic self-mutilation (suggested by the friends' severing of their own heads), joy with the other sex, the process of normalization in the wife-husband relationship, homosexual service (the friends' piercing each other with the sword), and the common "bed" of the pyre.

RAINER MARIA RILKE:
Alcestis

Translated by Dudley Fitts

And suddenly the Angel was with them, tossed
into the seething of the marriage feast
like a fresh ingredient. Drinking, they did not sense
the secret entrance of the god
who held his godhead wrapped like a wet cloak
about him,
who was one of them, or seemed so,
passing among them. But a reveller saw
how at the table's head the youthful host
failed in mid-speech, drawn from the banquet couch
upright, with all his body mirroring
a strangeness that terribly spoke to him.
And then,
as though it were a turbid mixture settling,
there was silence above the precipitate
of muttered confusion and the dregs of sinking chatter
already stale with the taint of musty laughter.

Thereat they recognized the slender god
standing there, full of his errand, beyond appeal:
almost, they knew what it was,
yet, spoken,
it passed all knowing, not to be understood.
Admetus must die. When? This very hour.

He stripped off the shell of his terror in broken pieces
and stretched out his hand from the ruin to plead with the god:
for years, for yet a single year of youth,
for months, for weeks, for only a few days,
alas not days, for nights, for one night only,
only a night, for this night only, for this.
The god was deaf as he wept,
sobbing, helpless to hold it back, screaming
as his mother had screamed when she was bearing him.

And she came to him,
And his father came, the old man his father,
and they stood before him, ancient, powerless, used.
Weeping, he saw them as though for the first time,
and ceased, and swallowed his tears, and spoke to them:
Father,

does it mean so much to you, this last drop of life,
these dregs that stick in your throat? Then go,
pour it out. And you, old woman,
you, matron,
why are you here still? You are done with bearing.

In his grasp he held them like votive beasts: then at once
loosed them, brushed them aside,
afire with a new plan, crying *Kreôn! Kreôn!*
Only that: only the single name.
But there stood in his face the thing that he dared not speak,
the unsayable hope,
and he flushed as he turned to the young friend whom he loved
across the shuddering table.
The old ones—(thus in his face)—, they are no ransom.
Look, they are drained, worn out: they have no worth here.
But you, but you, in the wholeness of your beauty—

And suddenly he saw his friend no more.

Then he stood back. And what came was she:
smaller almost than he had ever known her,
frail and sad in her white wedding gown.
All the others are but a lane for her
through which she moves and moves—(soon to be there,
soon in his arms that open so painfully for her).
But as he waits, she speaks: not to him,
but to the god,
and the god listens to her,
and all are hearing her as though it were through the god.

There can be no other than I to take his place.
None but me: for who is more done with life
than I am? What is there left for me
of all that was here? Only that I must die.
Did she not tell you, who sent you upon this errand,
that the bed within there belongs to the world below?
And so fare well.
Farewell upon farewell: no dying man
has ever said goodbye from a fuller heart.
I have gone so that all this may be solved, dissolved
in burial under this man who is my husband.
Lead me away now. I will die his death.

And as the wind veers upon the high sea
the god went to her, almost as though she were dead,
and at once he was far from her husband, to whom, in passing,
he tossed in a small sign the hundred lives of the earth.
Admetus rushed toward them, wavering,

and grasped at them as in a dream. But they moved on
To the door where her women wept,
and then he saw
her face turned to him once more with a smile
as bright as a hope, as bright,
almost, as a promise to come back to him,
grown strong in deep death, into the world of life.
But he knelt; and his sudden hands
covered his face from everything but her smile.

MURIEL RUKEYSER:
Mortal Girl

The girl being chosen stood in her naked room
singing at last alone naked and proud
now that the god had departed and his doom
guarded her door forever and the sky
would flame in trophies all night and every day.

Sang: When your white sun stood still, I put away
my garments and my crafts and you came down.
When you took me as a flame, I turned to flame;
in whiteness lay on the mist-flower river-bank
when you as a swan arrived, and cloudy in my tower
for you as a shower of gold, the lily bright in my hand
once, you as unthinkable light.

Make me more human,
give me the consciousness
of every natural shape, to lie here ready
for love as every power.
I wait in all my hopes,
poet beast and woman,
wait for the superhuman,
the god who invaded the gold lady,
the god who spoke to the naked princess,
the storm over the fiery wanderer.

Within me your city burning, and your desperate tree.
All that the song and the apparition gave
to seal my mouth with fire, make me mad
with song and pain and waiting, leave me free
in all my own shapes, deep in the spirit's cave,
to sing again the entrance of the god.

J. F. POWERS:
Lions, Harts, Leaping Does

"'Thirty-ninth pope. Anastasius, a Roman, appointed that while the Gospel was reading they should stand and not sit. He exempted from the ministry those that were lame, impotent, or diseased persons, and slept with his forefathers in peace, being a confessor.'"

"Anno?"

"'Anno 404.'"

They sat there in the late afternoon, the two old men grown grey in the brown robes of the Order. Angular winter daylight forsook the small room, almost a cell in the primitive sense, and passed through the window into the outside world. The distant horizon, which it sought to join, was still bright and strong against approaching night. The old Franciscans: one priest, one brother, were left among the shadows in the room.

"Can you see to read one more, Titus?" the priest Didymus asked. "Number fourteen." He did not cease staring out the window at day becoming night on the horizon. The thirty-ninth pope said Titus might not be a priest. Did Titus, reading, understand? He could never really tell about Titus, who said nothing now. There was only silence, then a dry whispering of pages turning. "Number fourteen," Didymus said. "That's Zephyrinus. I always like the old heretic on that one, Titus."

According to one bibliographer, Bishop Bale's *Pageant of Popes Contayninge the Lyves of all the Bishops of Rome, from the Beginninge of them to the Year of Grace 1555*, was a denunciation of every pope from Peter to Paul IV. However inviting to readers that might sound, it was in sober fact a lie. The first popes, persecuted and mostly martyred, wholly escaped the author's remarkable spleen and even enjoyed his crusty approbation. Father Didymus, his aged appetite for biography jaded by the orthodox lives, found the work fascinating. He usually referred to it as "Bishop Bale's funny book" and to the Bishop as a heretic.

Titus squinted at the yellowed page. He snapped a glance at the light hovering at the window. Then he closed his eyes and with great feeling recited:

"'O how joyous and how delectable is it to see religious men devout and fervent in the love of God, well mannered—'"

"Titus," Didymus interrupted softly.

"'—and well taught in ghostly learning.'"

"Titus, read." Didymus placed the words in their context. The First Book of *The Imitation* and Chapter, if he was not mistaken, XXV. The trick was no longer in finding the source of Titus's quotations; it was putting them in their exact context. It had become an unconfessed contest between them, and it gratified Didymus to think he had been able to place

he fragment. Titus knew two books by heart, *The Imitation and The ittle Flowers of St. Francis.* Lately, unfortunately, he had begun to learn nother. He was more and more quoting from Bishop Bale. Didymus eminded himself he must not let Titus read past the point where the mar- yred popes left off. What Bale had to say about Peter's later successors ounded incongruous—"unmete" in the old heretic's own phrase—com- ng from a Franciscan brother. Two fathers had already inquired of)idymus concerning Titus. One had noted the antique style of his words nd had ventured to wonder if Brother Titus, Christ preserve us, might be lightly possessed. He cited the case of the illiterate Missouri farmer who ursed the Church in a forgotten Aramaic tongue.

"Read, Titus."

Titus squinted at the page once more and read in his fine dead voice.

" 'Fourteenth pope, Zephyrinus. Zephyrinus was a Roman born, a nan as writers do testify, more addicted with all endeavor to the service f God than to the cure of any worldly affairs. Whereas before his time he wine in the celebrating the communion was ministered in a cup of wood, e first did alter that, and instead thereof brought in cups or chalices of lass. And yet he did not this upon any superstition, as thinking wood to e unlawful, or glass to be more holy for that use, but because the one is nore comely and seemly, as by experience it appeareth than the other. And yet some wooden dolts do dream that the wooden cups were changed y him because that part of the wine, or as they thought, the royal blood f Christ, did soak into the wood, and so it can not be in glass. Surely ooner may wine soak into any wood than any wit into those winey heads hat thus both deceive themselves and slander this Godly martyr.' "

"Anno?"

Titus squinted at the page again. " 'Anno 222,' " he read.

They were quiet for a moment which ended with the clock in the tower ooming once for the half-hour. Didymus got up and stood so close to the vindow his breath became visible. Noticing it, he inhaled deeply and then, xhaling, he sent a gust of smoke churning against the freezing pane, louding it. Some old unmelted snow in tree crotches lay dirty and white n the gathering dark.

"It's cold out today," Didymus said.

He stepped away from the window and over to Titus, whose face was elaxed in openeyed sleep. He took Bishop Bale's funny book unnoticed rom Titus's hands.

"Thank you, Titus," he said.

Titus blinked his eyes slowly once, then several times quickly. His ody gave a shudder, as if coming to life.

"Yes, Father?" he was asking.

"I said thanks for reading. You are a great friend to me."

"Yes, Father."

"I know you'd rather read other authors." Didymus moved to the vindow, stood there gazing through the tops of trees, their limbs black and

bleak against the sky. He rubbed his hands. "I'm going for a walk before Vespers. Is it too cold for you, Titus?"

" 'A good religious man that is fervent in his religion taketh all things well, and doth gladly all that he is commanded to do.' "

Didymus, walking across the room, stopped and looked at Titus just in time to see him open his eyes. He was quoting again: *The Imitation* and still in Chapter XXV. Why had he said that? To himself Didymus repeated the words and decided Titus, his mind moving intelligently but so pathetically largo, was documenting the act of reading Bishop Bale when there were other books he preferred.

"I'm going out for a walk," Didymus said.

Titus rose and pulled down the full sleeves of his brown robe in anticipation of the cold.

"I think it is too cold for you, Titus," Didymus said.

Titus faced him undaunted, arms folded and hands muffled in his sleeves, eyes twinkling incredulously. He was ready to go. Didymus got the idea Titus knew himself to be the healthier of the two. Didymus was vaguely annoyed at this manifestation of the truth. *Vanitas.*

"Won't they need you in the kitchen now?" he inquired.

Immediately he regretted having said that. And the way he had said it, with some malice, as though labour *per se* were important and the intention not so. *Vanitas* in a friar, and at his age too. Confronting Titus with a distinction his simple mind could never master and which, if it could, his great soul would never recognize. Titus only knew all that was necessary, that a friar did what he was best at in the community. And no matter the nature of his toil, the variety of the means at hand, the end was the same for all friars. Or indeed for all men, if they cared to know. Titus worked in the kitchen and garden. Was Didymus wrong in teaching geometry out of personal preference and perhaps—if this was so he was—out of pride? Had the spiritual worth of his labor been vitiated because of that? He did not think so, no. No, he taught geometry because it was useful and eternally true, like his theology, and though of a lower order of truth it escaped the common fate of theology and the humanities, perverted through the ages in the mouths of dunderheads and fools. From that point of view, his work came to the same thing as Titus's. The vineyard was everywhere, they were in it, and that was essential.

Didymus, consciously humble, held open the door for Titus. Sandals scraping familiarly, they passed through dark corridors until they came to the stairway. Lights from floors above and below spangled through the carven apertures of the winding stair and fell in confusion upon the worn oaken steps.

At the outside door they were ambushed. An old friar stepped out of the shadows to intercept them. Standing with Didymus and Titus, however, made him appear younger. Or possibly it was the tenseness of him.

"Good evening, Father," he said to Didymus. "And Titus."

Didymus nodded in salutation and Titus said deliberately, as though he were the first one ever to put words in such conjunction:

"Good evening, Father Rector."

The Rector watched Didymus expectantly. Didymus studied the man's face. It told him nothing but curiosity—a luxury which could verge on vice in the cloister. Didymus frowned his incomprehension. He was about to speak. He decided against it, turning to Titus:

"Come on, Titus, we've got a walk to take before Vespers."

The Rector was left standing.

They began to circle the monastery grounds. Away from the buildings it was brighter. With a sudden shudder, Didymus felt the freezing air bite into his body all over. Instinctively he drew up his cowl. That was a little better. Not much. It was too cold for him to relax, breathe deeply and stride freely. It had not looked this cold from his window. He fell into Titus's gait. The steps were longer, but there was an illusion of warmth about moving in unison. Bit by bit he found himself duplicating every aspect of Titus in motion. Heads down, eyes just ahead of the next step, undeviating, they seemed peripatetic figures in a Gothic frieze. The stones of the walk were trampled over with frozen footsteps. Titus's feet were grey and bare in their open sandals. Pieces of ice, the thin edges of ruts, cracked off under foot, skittering sharply away. A crystal fragment lit between Titus's toes and did not melt there. He did not seem to notice it. This made Didymus lift his eyes.

A fine Franciscan! Didymus snorted, causing a flurry of vapors. He had the despicable caution of the comfortable who move mountains, if need be, to stay that way. Here he was, cowl up and heavy woollen socks on, and regretting the weather because it exceeded his anticipations. Painfully he stubbed his toe on purpose and at once accused himself of exhibitionism. Then he damned the expression for its modernity. He asked himself: wherein lay the renunciation of the world, the flesh and the devil, the whole point of following after St. Francis today? Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, the three vows. There was nothing of suffering in the poverty of the friar nowadays: he was penniless, but materially rich compared to—what was the phrase he used to hear?—"one third of the nation." A beggar, a homeless mendicant by very definition, he knew nothing—except as it affected others "less fortunate"—of the miseries of begging in the streets. Verily, it was no heavy cross, this vow of Poverty, so construed and practiced, in the modern world. Begging had become unfashionable. Somewhere along the line the meaning had been lost, they had become too "fortunate." Official agencies, to whom it was a nasty but necessary business, dispensed Charity without mercy or grace. He recalled with wry amusement Frederick Barbarossa's appeal to fellow princes when opposed by the might of the medieval Church: "We have a clean conscience, and it tells us that God is with us. Ever have we striven to bring back priests and, in especial, those of the topmost rank, to the condition of the first Christian Church. In those days the clergy

raised their eyes to the angels, shone through miracles, made whole the sick, raised the dead, make Kings and Princes subject to them, not with arms but with their holiness. But now they are smothered in delights. To withdraw from them the harmful riches which burden them to their own undoing is a labor of love in which all Princes should eagerly participate."

And Chastity, what of that? Well, that was all over for him—a battle he had fought and won many years ago. A sin whose temptations had prevailed undiminished through the centuries, but withal for him, an old man, a dead issue, a young man's trial. Only Obedience remained, and that too was no longer difficult for him. There was something—much as he disliked the term—to be said for "conditioning." He had to smile at himself: why should he bristle so at using the word? It was only contemporary slang for a theory the Church had always known. "Psychiatry," so called, and all the ghastly superstition that attended its practice, the deification of its high priests in the secular schools, made him ill. But it would pass. Just look how alchemy had flourished, and where was it today?

Clearly an abecedarian observance of the vows did not promise perfection. Stemmed in divine wisdom, they were branches meant to flower forth, but requiring of the friar the water and sunlight of sacrifice. The letter led nowhere. It was the spirit of the vows which opened the way and revealed to the soul, no matter the flux of circumstance, the means of salvation.

He had picked his way through the welter of familiar factors again—again to the same conclusion. The last time when he received the letter from Seraphin asking him to come to St. Louis, saying his years prohibited unnecessary travel and endowed his request with a certain prerogative, No, he had written back, it's simply impossible—not saying why. God help him, as a natural man, he had an inordinate desire to see his brother again. One of them must die soon. But as a friar, he remembered from Titus: "Unless a man be clearly delivered from the love of all creatures, he may not fully tend to his creator." Therein, the keeping of the vows having become an easy habit for him, was his opportunity. It was plain and there was sacrifice and it was hard. And he had not gone.

The flesh just above his knees felt frozen. They were drawing near the entrance again. His face too felt the same way, like a slab of pasteboard, stiffest at the tip of his nose. When he wrinkled his brow and puffed out his cheeks to blow hot air up to his nose, his skin seemed to crackle like old parchment. His eyes watered from the wind. He pressed a hand, warm from his sleeve, to his exposed neck. Frozen, like his face. It would be chapped tomorrow.

Titus, white hair awry in the wind, looked just the same.

They entered the monastery door. The Rector stopped them. It was almost as before, except that Didymus was occupied with feeling his face and patting it back to life.

"Ah, Didymus! It must be cold indeed!" The Rector smiled at Titus nd returned his gaze to Didymus. He made it appear that they were llied in being amused at Didymus's face. Didymus touched his nose tend- rly. Assured it would stand the operation, he blew it lustily. He stuffed he handkerchief up his sleeve. The Rector, misinterpreting all this cere- nony, obviously was afraid of being ignored.

"The telegram, Didymus. I'm sorry, I thought it might have been mportant."

"I received no telegram."

They faced each other, waiting, experiencing a hanging moment of neasiness.

Then, having employed the deductive method, they both looked at Titus. Although he had not been listening, rather had been studying the aked toes in his sandals, he sensed their eyes questioning him.

"Yes, Father Rector?" he answered.

"The telegram for Father Didymus, Titus?" the Rector demanded. Where is it?" Titus started momentarily out of willingness to be of ervice, but ended, his mind refusing to click, impassive before them. The ector shook his head in faint exasperation and reached his hand down nto the folds of Titus's cowl. He brought forth two envelopes. One, the elegram, he gave to Didymus. The other, a letter, he handed back to Titus.

"I gave you this letter this morning, Titus. It's for Father Anthony." ntently Titus stared unremembering at the letter. "I wish you would ee that Father Anthony gets it right away, Titus. I think it's a bill."

Titus held the envelope tightly to his breast and said: "Father nthony."

Then his eyes were attracted by the sound of Didymus tearing open he telegram. While Didymus read the telegram, Titus's expression howed he at last understood his failure to deliver it. He was perturbed, nounting inner distress moving his lips silently.

Didymus looked up from the telegram. He saw the grief in Titus's ace and said, astonished, "How did you know, Titus?"

Titus's eyes were both fixed and lowered in sorrow. It seemed to)idymus that Titus knew the meaning of the telegram. Didymus was uddenly weak, as before a miracle. His eyes went to the Rector to see ow he was taking it. Then it occurred to him the Rector could not know vhat had happened.

As though nothing much had, the Rector laid an absolving hand light- / upon Titus's shoulder.

"He can't forgive himself for not delivering the telegram now that he emembers it. That's all."

Didymus was relieved. Seeing the telegram in his hand, he folded it uickly and stuffed it back in the envelope. He handed it to the Rector. 'almly, in a voice quite drained of feeling, he said, "My brother, Father eraphin, died last night in St. Louis."

"Father Seraphin *from Rome*?"

"Yes," Didymus said, "in St. Louis. He was my brother. Appointed a confessor in Rome, a privilege for a foreigner. He was ninety-two."

"I know that, Didymus, an honor for the Order. I had no idea he was in this country. Ninety-two! God rest his soul!"

"I had a letter from him only recently."

"You did?"

"He wanted me to come to St. Louis. I hadn't seen him for twenty-five years at least."

"Twenty-five years?"

"It was impossible for me to visit him."

"But if he was in this country, Didymus . . . "

The Rector waited for Didymus to explain.

Didymus opened his mouth to speak, heard the clock in the tower sound the quarter-hour, and said nothing, listening, lips parted, to the last of the three strokes die away.

"Why Didymus, it could easily have been arranged," the Rector persisted.

Didymus turned abruptly to Titus, who, standing in a dream, had been inattentive since the clock struck.

"Come, Titus, we'll be late."

He hastened down the corridor with Titus. "No," he said in agitation, causing Titus to look at him in surprise. "I told him No. It was simply impossible." He was conscious of Titus's attention. "To visit him, Seraphin, who is dead." That had come naturally enough for being the first time in his thoughts that Seraphin was dead. Was there not some merit in his dispassionate acceptance of the fact?

They entered the chapel for Vespers and knelt down.

II

The clock struck. One, two . . . two. Two? No, there must have been one or two strokes before. He had gone to sleep. It was three. At least three, probably four. Or five. He waited. It could not be two: he remembered the brothers filing darkly into the chapel at that hour. Disturbing the shadows for matins and lauds. If it was five—he listened for faint noises in the building—it would only be a few minutes. They would come in, the earliest birds, to say their Masses. There were no noises. He looked toward the windows on the St. Joseph side of the chapel. He might be able to see a light from a room across the court. That was not certain even if it was five. It would have to come through the stained glass. Was that possible? It was still night. Was there a moon? He looked round the chapel. If there was, it might shine on a window. There was no moon. Or it was overhead. Or powerless against the glass. He yawned. It could not be five. His knees were numb from kneeling. He shifted on them. His back ached. Straightening it, he gasped for breath. He saw the sanctuary light. The only light, red. Then it came back to him. Seraphin was dead. He tried to pray. No

words. Why words? Meditation in the Presence. The perfect prayer. He fell asleep . . .

. . . Spiraling brown coil on coil under the golden sun the river slithered across the blue and flowerflecked land. On an eminence they held identical hands over their eyes for visors and mistook it with pleasure for an endless murmuring serpent. They considered unafraid the prospect of its turning in its course and standing on tail to swallow them gurgling alive. They sensed it was in them to command this also by a wish. Their visor hands vanished before their eyes and became instead the symbol of brotherhood clasped between them. This they wished. Smiling the same smile back and forth they began laughing: "Jonah!" And were walking murkily up and down the brown belly of the river in mock distress. Above them, foolishly triumphant, rippling in contentment, mewed the waves. Below swam an occasional large fish, absorbed in ignoring them, and the mass of crustacea, eagerly seething, too numerous on the bottom to pretend exclusiveness. "Jonah indeed!" the brothers said, surprised to see the bubbles they birthed. They strolled then for hours this way. The novelty wearing off (without regret, else they would have wished themselves elsewhere), they began to talk and say ordinary things. Their mother had died, their father too, and how old did that make them? It was the afternoon of the funerals, which they had managed, transcending time, to have held jointly. She had seemed older and for some reason he otherwise. How, they wondered, should it be with them, *memento mori* clicking simultaneously within them, lackaday. The sound of dirt descending six feet to clatter on the coffins was memorable but unmentionable. Their own lives, well . . . only half curious (something to do) they halted to kick testingly a waterlogged rowboat resting on the bottom, the crustacea complaining and olive green silt rising to speckle the surface with dark stars . . . well, what *had* they been doing? A crayfish pursued them, clad in sable armor, dearly desiring to do battle, brandishing hinged swords. Well, for one thing working for the canonization of Fra Bartolomeo, had got two cardinals interested, was hot after those remaining who were at all possible, a slow business. Yes, one would judge so in the light of past canonizations, though being stationed in Rome had its advantages. Me, the same old grind, teaching, pounding away, giving Pythagoras no rest in his grave . . . They made an irresolute pass at the crayfish, who had caught up with them. More about Fra Bartolomeo, what else is there? Except, you will laugh or have me excommunicated for wanton presumption, though it's only faith in a faithless age, making a vow not to die until he's made a saint, recognized rather—he is one, convinced of it, Didymus (never can get used to calling you that) a saint sure as I'm alive, having known him, no doubt of it, something wrong with your knee? Knees then! The crayfish, he's got hold of you there, another at your back. If you like, we'll leave, only I do like it here. Well, go ahead then, you never did like St. Louis, isn't that what you used to say? Alone, in pain, he rose to the surface, parting the silt stars. The sun like molten gold squirted him

in the eye. Numb now, unable to remember and too blind to refurnish his memory by observation, he waited for this limbo to clear away . . .

Awake now, he was face to face with a flame, blinding him. He avoided it. A dead weight bore him down, his aching back. Slowly, like ink in a blotter, his consciousness spread. The supports beneath him were kneeling limbs, his, the veined hands, bracing him, pressing flat, his own. His body, it seemed, left off there; the rest was something else, floor. He raised his head to the flame again and tried to determine what kept it suspended even with his face. He shook his head, blinking dumbly, a fourlegged beast. He could see nothing, only his knees and hands, which he felt rather, and the flame floating unaccountably in the darkness. That part alone was a mystery. And then there came a pressure and pull on his shoulders, urging him up. Fingers, a hand, a rustling related to its action, then the rustling in rhythm with the folds of a brown curtain, a robe naturally, ergo a friar, holding a candle, trying to raise him up, Titus. The clock began striking.

"Put out the candle," Didymus said.

Titus closed his palm slowly around the flame, unflinching, snuffing it. The odor of burning string. Titus pinched the wick deliberately. He waited a moment, the clock falling silent, and said, "Father Rector expects you will say a Mass for the Dead at five o'clock."

"Yes, I know." He yawned deliciously. "I told him *that*." He bit his lips at the memory of the disgusting yawn. Titus had found him asleep. Shame overwhelmed him, and he searched his mind for justification. He found none.

"It is five now," Titus said.

It was maddening. "I don't see anyone else if it's five," he snapped. Immediately he was aware of a light burning in the sacristy. He blushed and grew pale. Had someone besides Titus seen him sleeping? But, listening, he heard nothing. No one else was up yet. He was no longer pale and was only blushing now. He saw it all hopefully. He was saved. Titus had gone to the sacristy to prepare for Mass. He must have come out to light the candles on the main altar. Then he had seen the bereaved keeping vigil on all fours, asleep, snoring even. What did Titus think of that? It withered him to remember, but he was comforted some that the only witness had been Titus. Had the sleeping apostles in Gethsemane been glad it was Christ?

Wrong! Hopelessly wrong! For there had come a noise after all. Someone else was in the sacristy. He stiffened and walked palely toward it. He must go there and get ready to say his Mass. A few steps he took only, his back buckling out, humping, his knees sinking to the floor, his hands last. The floor with fingers smelling of dust and genesis reached up and held him. The fingers were really spikes and they were dusty from holding him this way all his life. For a radiant instant which had something of eternity about it, he saw the justice of his position. Then there was nothing.

III

A little snow had fallen in the night, enough to powder the dead grass and soften the impression the leafless trees etched in the sky. Greyly the sky promised more snow, but now, at the end of the day following his collapse in the chapel, it was melting. Didymus, bundled around by blankets, sat in a wheelchair at the window, unsleepy. Only the landscape wearied him. Dead and unmoving though it must be, of that he was sure, it conspired to make him see everything in it as living, moving, something to be watched, each visible tuft of grass, each cluster of snow. The influence of the snow perhaps? For the ground, ordinarily uniform in texture and drabness, had split up into individual patches. They appeared to be involved in a struggle of some kind, possibly to overlap each other, constantly shifting. But whether it was equally one against one, or one against all, he could not make out. He reminded himself he did not believe it was actually happening. It was confusing and he closed his eyes. After a time this confused and tired him in the same way. The background of darkness became a field of vari-colored factions, warring, and, worse than the landscape, things like worms and comets wriggled and exploded before his closed eyes. Finally, as though to orchestrate their motions, they carried with them a bewildering noise or music which grew louder and cacophonous. The effect was cumulative, inevitably unbearable, and Didymus would have to open his eyes again. The intervals of peace became gradually rarer on the landscape. Likewise when he shut his eyes to it the restful darkness dissolved sooner than before into riot.

The door of his room opened, mercifully dispelling his illusions, and that, because no knock, could only be Titus. Unable to move in his chair, Didymus listened to Titus moving about the room at his back. The tinkle of a glass once, the squeak of the bookcase indicating a book taken out or replaced, they were sounds Didymus could recognize. But that first tap-tap and the consequent click of metal on metal, irregular and scarcely audible, was disconcertingly unfamiliar. His curiosity, centering on it, raised it to a delicious mystery. He kept down the urge to shout at Titus. But he attempted to fish from memory the precise character of the corner from which the sound came with harrowing repetition. The sound stopped then, as though to thwart him on the brink of revelation. Titus's footsteps scraped across the room. The door opened and closed. For a few steps, Didymus heard Titus going down the corridor. He asked himself not to be moved by idle curiosity, a thing of the senses. He would not be tempted now.

A moment later the keystone of his good intention crumbled, and the whole edifice of his detachment with it. More shakily than quickly, Didymus moved his hands to the wheels of the chair. He would roll over to the corner and investigate the sound . . . He would? His hands lay limply on the wheels, ready to propel him to his mind's destination, but, weak, white, powerless to grip the wheels or anything. He regarded them with

contempt. He had known they would fail him; he had been foolish to give them another chance. Disdainful of his hands, he looked out the window. He could still do that, couldn't he? It was raining some now. The landscape started to move, rearing and reeling crazily, as though drunken with the rain. In horror, Didymus damned his eyes. He realized this trouble was probably going to be chronic. He turned his gaze in despair to the trees, to the branches level with his eyes and nearer than the insane ground. Hesitating warily, fearful the gentle boughs under scrutiny would turn into hideous waving tentacles, he looked. With a thrill, he knew he was seeing clearly.

Gauzily rain descended in a fine spray, hanging in fat berries from the wet black branches where leaves had been and buds would be, cold crystal drops. They fell now and then ripely of their own weight, or shaken by the intermittent wind they spilled before their time. Promptly they appeared again, pendulous.

Watching the raindrops prove gravity, he was grateful for nature's, rather than his, return to reason. Still, though he professed faith in his faculties, he would not look away from the trees and down at the ground, nor close his eyes. Gratefully he savored the cosmic truth in the falling drops and the mildly trembling branches. There was order, he thought, which in justice and science ought to include the treacherous landscape. Risking all, he ventured a glance at the ground. All was still there. He smiled. He was going to close his eyes (to make it universal and conclusive), when the door opened again.

Didymus strained to catch the meaning of Titus's movements. Would the clicking sound begin? Titus did go to that corner of the room again. Then it came, louder than before, but only once this time.

Titus came behind his chair, turned it, and wheeled him over to the corner.

On a hook which Titus had screwed into the wall hung a bird cage covered with black cloth.

"What's all this?" Didymus said.

Titus tapped the covered cage expectantly.

A bird chirped once.

"The bird," Titus explained in excitement, "is inside."

Didymus almost laughed. He sensed in time, however, the necessity of seeming befuddled and severe. Titus expected it.

"I don't believe it," Didymus snapped.

Titus smiled wisely and tapped the cage again.

"There!" he exclaimed when the bird chirped.

Didymus shook his head in mock anger. "You made that beastly noise, Titus, you mountebank!"

Titus, profoundly amused by such scepticism, removed the black cover.

The bird, a canary, flicked its head sidewise in interest, looking them up and down. Then it turned its darting attention to the room. It chirped

once in curt acceptance of the new surroundings. Didymus and Titus came under its black dot of an eye once more, this time for closer analysis. The canary chirped twice, perhaps that they were welcome, even pleasing, and stood on one leg to show them what a gay bird it was. It then returned to the business of pecking a piece of apple.

"I see you've given him something to eat," Didymus said, and felt that Titus, though he seemed content to watch the canary, waited for him to say something more. "I am very happy, Titus, to have this canary," he went on. "I suppose he will come in handy now that I must spend my days in this infernal chair."

Titus did not look at him while he said, "He is a good bird, Father. He is one of the Saint's own good birds."

Through the window Didymus watched the days and nights come and go. For the first time, though his life as a friar had been copiously annotated with significant references, he got a good idea of eternity. Monotony, of course, was one word for it, but like all the others, as well as the allegories worked up by imaginative retreat masters, it was empty beside the experience itself, untranslatable. He would doze and wonder if by some quirk he had been cast out of the world into eternity, but since it was neither heaven nor exactly purgatory or hell, as he understood them, he concluded it must be an uncharted isle subscribing to the mother forms only in the matter of time. And having thought this, he was faintly annoyed at his ponderous whimsy. Titus, like certain of the hours, came periodically. He would read or simply sit with him in silence. The canary was there always, but except as it showed signs of sleepiness at twilight and spirit at dawn, Didymus regarded it as a subtle device, like the days and nights and bells, to give the lie to the vulgar error that time flew. The cage was small and the canary would not sing. Time, hanging in the room like a jealous fog, possessed him and voided everything except it. It seemed impossible each time Titus came that he should be able to escape the room.

" 'After him,' " Titus read from Bishop Bale one day, " 'came Fabius, a Roman born, who (as Eusebius witnesseth) as he was returning home out of the field, and with his countrymen present to elect a new bishop, there was a pigeon seen standing on his head and suddenly he was created pastor of the Church, which he looked not for.' "

They smiled at having the same thought and both looked up at the canary. Since Didymus sat by the window most of the day now, he had asked Titus to put a hook there for the cage. He had to admit to himself he did this to let Titus know he appreciated the canary. Also, as a secondary motive, he reasoned, it enabled the canary to look out the window. What a little yellow bird could see to interest it in the frozen scene was a mystery, but that, Didymus sighed, was a two-edged sword. And he took to watching the canary more.

So far as he was able to detect the moods of the canary he participated in them. In the morning the canary, bright and clownish, flitted back and

forth between the two perches in the cage, hanging from the sides an cocking its little tufted head at Didymus querulously. During these acro batics Didymus would twitch his hands in quick imitation of the canary' stunts. He asked Titus to construct a tiny swing, such as he had seen which the canary might learn to use, since it appeared to be an intelligen and daring sort. Titus got the swing, the canary did master it, but then seemed to be nothing Didymus could do with his hands that was lik swinging. In fact, after watching a while it was as though the canar were fixed to a pendulum, inanimate, a piece of machinery, a yellow blur— ticking, for the swing made a little sound, and Didymus went to sleep an often when he woke the canary was still going, like a clock. Didymus ha no idea how long he slept at these times, maybe a minute, maybe hour Gradually the canary got bored with the swing and used it less and less In the same way, Didymus suspected, he himself had wearied of lookin out the window. The first meagre satisfaction had worn off. The dea trees, the sleeping snow, like the swing for the canary, were sources of di version which soon grew stale. They were captives, he and the canary, an the only thing they craved was escape. Didymus slowly considered th problem. There was nothing, obviously, for him to do. He could pra which he did, but he was not sure the only thing wrong with him was th fact he could not walk and that to devote his prayer to that end was just fiable. Inevitably it occurred to him his plight might well be an act c God. Why this punishment, though, he asked himself, and immediatel supplied the answer. He had, for one thing, gloried too much in havin it in him to turn down Seraphin's request to come to St. Louis. The in tention, that was all important, and he, he feared, had done the right thin for the wrong reason. He had noticed something of the fakir in himse before. But it was not clear if he had erred. There was a certain conso lation, at bottom dismal, in this doubt. It was true there appeared to be nice justice in being stricken a cripple if he had been wrong in refusin to travel to see Seraphin, if human love was all he was fitted for, if he wa incapable of renunciation for the right reason, if the mystic counsels wer too strong for him, if he was still too pedestrian after all these years c prayer and contemplation, if—

The canary was swinging, the first time in several days.

The reality of his position was insupportable. There were two way of regarding it and he could not make up his mind. Humbly, he wishe to get well and to be able to walk. But if this was a punishment, was n prayer to lift it declining to see the divine point? He did wish to get well that would settle it. Otherwise his predicament could only be resolve through means more serious than he dared cope with. It would be lik refusing to see Seraphin all over again. By some mistake, he protest he had at last been placed in a position vital with meaning and preceden inescapably Christian. But was he the man for it? Unsure of himsel he was afraid to go on trial. It would be no minor trial, so construed, b one in which the greatest values were involved, a human soul and th

means of its salvation or damnation. Not watered down suburban precautions and routine pious exercises, but Faith such as saints and martyrs had, and Despair such as only they had been tempted by. No, he was not the man for it. He was unworthy. He simply desired to walk and in a few years to die a normal uninspired death. He did not wish to see (what was apparent) the greatest significance in his affliction. He preferred to think in terms of physical betterment. He was so sure he was not a saint that he did not consider this easier road beneath him, though attracted by the higher one. That was the rub. Humbly, then, he wanted to be able to walk, but he wondered if there was not presumption in such humility.

Thus he decided to pray for health and count the divine hand not there. Decided. A clean decision—not distinction—no mean feat in the light of all the moral theology he had swallowed. The canary, all its rocking come to naught once more, slept motionless in the swing. Despite the manifest prudence of the course he had settled upon, Didymus dozed off ill at ease in his wheelchair by the window. Distastefully, the last thing he remembered was that "prudence" is a virtue more celebrated in the modern Church.

At his request in the days following a doctor visited him. The Rector came along too. When Didymus tried to find out the nature of his illness, the doctor looked solemn and pronounced it to be one of those things. Didymus received this with a look of mystification. So the doctor went on to say there was no telling about it. Time alone would tell. Didymus asked the doctor to recommend some books dealing with cases like his. They might have one of them in the monastery library. Titus could read to him in the meantime. For, though he disliked being troublesome, "one of those things" as a diagnosis meant very little to an unscientific beggar like him. The phrase had a philosophic ring to it, but to his knowledge neither the Early Fathers nor the Scholastics seemed to have dealt with it. The Rector smiled. The doctor, annoyed, replied drily:

"Is that a fact?"

Impatiently Didymus said, "I know how old I am, if that's it."

Nothing was lost of the communion he kept with the canary. He still watched its antics and his fingers in his lap followed them clumsily. He did not forget about himself, that he must pray for health, that it was best that way—"prudence" dictated it—but he did think more of the canary's share of their captivity. A canary in a cage, he reasoned, is like a bud which never blooms.

He asked Titus to get a book on canaries, but nothing came of it and he did not mention it again.

Some days later Titus read:

" 'Twenty-ninth pope, Marcellus, a Roman, was pastor of the Church, feeding it with wisdom and doctrine. And (as I may say with the Prophet) a man according to God's heart and full of Christian works. This man admonished Maximianus the Emperor and endeavored to remove him from

persecuting the saints—' "

"Stop a moment, Titus," Didymus interrupted.

Steadily since Titus began to read the canary had been jumping from the swing to the bottom of the cage. Now it was quietly standing on one foot in the swing. Suddenly it flew at the side of the cage nearest them and hung there, its ugly little claws, like bent wire, hooked to the slender bars. It observed them intently, first Titus and then Didymus, at whom it continued to stare. Didymus's hands were tense in his lap.

"Go ahead, read," Didymus said, relaxing his hands.

" 'But the Emperor being more hardened, commanded Marcellus to be beaten with cudgels and to be driven out of the city, wherefore he entered into the house of one Lucina, a widow, and there kept the congregation secretly, which the tyrant hearing, made a stable for cattle of the same house and committed the keeping of it to the bishop Marcellus. After that he governed the Church by writing Epistles, without any other kind of teaching, being condemned to such a vile service. And being thus daily tormented with strife and noisomeness, at length gave up the ghost. Anno 308.' "

"Very good, Titus. I wonder how we missed that one before."

The canary, still hanging on the side of the cage, had not moved, its head turned sidewise, its eye as before fixed on Didymus.

"Would you bring me a glass of water, Titus?"

Titus got up and looked in the cage. The canary hung there, as though waiting, not a feather stirring.

"The bird has water here," Titus said, pointing to the small cup fastened to the cage.

"For me, Titus, the water's for me. Don't you think I know you look after the canary? You don't forget us, though I don't see why you don't."

Titus left the room with a glass.

Didymus's hands were tense again. Eyes on the canary's eye, he got up from his wheelchair, his face strained and white with the impossible effort, and, his fingers somehow managing it, he opened the cage. The canary darted out and circled the room chirping. Before it lit, though it seemed about to make its perch triumphantly the top of the cage, Didymus fell over on his face and lay prone on the floor.

In bed that night, unsuffering and barely alive, he saw at will everything revealed in his past. Events long forgotten happened again before his eyes. Clearly, sensitively, he saw Seraphin and himself, just as they had always been—himself, never quite sure. He heard all that he had ever said, and that anyone had said to him. He had talked too much too. The past mingled with the present. In the same moment and scene he made his first Communion, was ordained, and confessed his sins for the last time.

The canary perched in the dark atop the cage, head warm under wing, already, it seemed to Didymus, without memory of its captivity, dreaming

of a former freedom, an ancestral summer day with flowers and trees. Outside it was snowing.

The Rector, followed by others, came into the room and administered the last sacrament. Didymus heard them all gathered prayerfully around his bed thinking (they thought) secretly: this sacrament often strengthens the dying, tip-of-the-tongue wisdom indigenous to the priesthood, Henry the Eighth had six wives. He saw the same hackneyed smile, designed to cheer, pass bravely among them, and marvelled at the crudity of it. They went away then, all except Titus, their individual footsteps sounding (for him) the character of each friar. He might have been Francis himself for what he knew then of the little brothers and the cure of souls. He heard them thinking their expectation to be called from bed before daybreak to return to his room and say the office of the dead over his body, become the body, and whispering hopefully to the contrary. Death was now an unwelcome guest in the cloister.

He wanted nothing in the world for himself at last. This may have been the first time he found his will amenable to the Divine. He had never been less himself and more the saint. Yet now, so close to sublimity, or perhaps only tempted to believe so (the Devil is most wily at the deathbed), he was beset by the grossest distractions. They were to be expected, he knew, as indelible in the order of things: the bingo game going on under the Cross for the seamless garments of the Son of Man: everywhere the sign of the contradiction, and always. When would he cease to be surprised by it? Incidents repeated themselves, twined, parted, faded away, came back clear, and would not be prayed out of mind. He watched himself mounting the pulpit of a metropolitan church, heralded by the pastor as the renowned Franciscan father sent by God in His goodness to preach this Novena—like to say a little prayer to test the microphone, Father?—and later reading through the petitions to Our Blessed Mother, cynically tabulating the pleas for a Catholic boy friend, drunkenness banished, the sale of real estate and coming furiously upon one: "that I'm not pregnant." And at the same church on Good Friday carrying the crucifix along the communion rail for the people to kiss, giving them the indulgence, and afterwards in the sacristy wiping the lipstick of the faithful from the image of Christ crucified.

"Take down a book, any book, Titus, and read. Begin anywhere."

Roused by his voice, the canary fluttered, looked sharply about, and buried its head once more in the warmth of its wing.

"'By the lions,'" Titus read, "'are understood the acrimonies and impetuosities of the irascible faculty, which faculty is as bold and daring in its acts as are the lions. By the harts and the leaping does is understood the other faculty of the soul, which is the concupiscible—that is—'"

"Skip the exegesis," Didymus broke in weakly. "I can do without that now. Read the verse."

Titus read: "'Birds of swift wing, lions, harts, leaping does, mountains, valleys, banks, waters, breezes, heats and terrors that keep watch by

night, by the pleasant lyres and by the siren's song, I conjure you, cease your wrath and touch not the wall . . .'"

"Turn off the light, Titus."

Titus went over to the switch. There was a brief period of darkness during which Didymus's eyes became accustomed to a different shade, a glow rather, which possessed the room slowly. Then he saw the full moon had let down a ladder of light through the window. He could see the snow, strangely blue, falling outside. So sensitive was his mind and eye (because his body now faint no longer blurred his vision?) he could count the snowflakes, all of them separately, before they drifted, winding, below the sill.

With the same wonderful clarity, he saw what he had made of his life. He saw himself tied down, caged, stunted in his apostolate, seeking the crumbs, the little pleasure, neglecting the source, always knowing death changes nothing, only immortalizes . . . and still ever lukewarm. In trivial attachments, in love of things, was death, no matter the appearance of life. In the highest attachment only, no matter the appearance of death, was life. He had always known this truth, but now he was feeling it. Unable to move his hand, only his lips, and hardly breathing, was it too late to act?

"Open the window, Titus," he whispered.

And suddenly he could pray. *Hail Mary . . . Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death . . .* finally the time to say, *pray for* me *now—the hour of* my *death, amen.* Lest he deceive himself at the very end that this was the answer to a lifetime of praying for a happy death, happy because painless, he tried to turn his thoughts from himself, to join them to God, thinking how at last he did—didn't he *now*?—prefer God above all else. But ashamedly not sure he did, perhaps only fearing hell, with an uneasy sense of justice he put himself foremost among the wise in their own generation, the perennials seeking after God when doctor, lawyer, and bank fails. If he wronged himself, he did so out of humility, a holy error. He ended, to make certain he had not fallen under the same old presumption disguised as the face of humility, by flooding his mind with maledictions. He suffered the piercing white voice of the Apocalypse to echo in his soul: *But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.* And St. Bernard, fiery-eyed in a white habit, thundered at him from the twelfth century: "Hell is paved with the bald pates of priests!"

There was a soft flutter, the canary flew to the window sill, paused, and tilted into the snow. Titus stepped too late to the window and stood gazing dumbly after it. He raised a trembling old hand, fingers bent in awe and sorrow, to his forehead, and turned stealthily to Didymus.

Didymus closed his eyes. He let a long moment pass before he opened them. Titus, seeing him awake then, fussed with the window latch and held a hand down to feel the draught, nodding anxiously as though it were the only evil abroad in the world, all the time straining his old eyes for a glimpse of the canary somewhere in the trees.

Didymus said nothing, letting Titus keep his secret. With his whole will he tried to lose himself in the sight of God, and failed. He was not in the least transported. Even now he could find no divine sign within himself. He knew he still had to look outside, to Titus. God still chose to manifest Himself most in sanctity.

Titus, nervous under his stare, and to account for staying at the window so long, felt for the draught again, frowned, and kept his eye hunting among the trees.

The thought of being the cause of such elaborate dissimulation in so simple a soul made Didymus want to smile—or cry, he did not know which . . . and could do neither. Titus persisted. How long would it be, Didymus wondered faintly, before Titus ungrievingly gave the canary up for lost in the snowy arms of God? The snowflakes whirled at the window, for a moment for all their bright blue beauty as though struck still by lightning, and Didymus closed his eyes, only to find them there also, but darkly falling.

NAT HERTZ:

A Study in Possession,

or *They Were Hers Anyway*

She yearns for white houses to hide in her breasts,
For streets to fit in the folds of her thighs.
Towers delight her. She is maddened by stairs.

She leans on the low brown wall and weeps
For the town. The gardens would harm her,
She would splash in the flesh colored fountains.

She fears the tigers that slink through the wheat,
The bats that hang and sleep in the trees.

She would flee down the road that bends to town.
She would slip with the light into the tiger's eyes,
And hide in the wet folds of their brains.

She would float to the trees and caress
The sharp black claws of the bats.
She would shut their eyes and hide them in her armpits.

Behold, the gardens rest for her
The fountains await her.

KENNETH BURKE:

Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats

We are here set to analyze the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" as a viaticum that leads, by a series of transformations, into the oracle, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." We shall analyze the Ode "dramatistically," in terms of symbolic action.

To consider language as a means of *information* or *knowledge* is to consider it epistemologically, semantically, in terms of "science." To consider it as a mode of *action* is to consider it in terms of "poetry." For a poem is an act, the symbolic act of the poet who made it—an act of such a nature that, in surviving as a structure or object, it enables us as readers to re-enact it.

"Truth" being the essential word of knowledge (science) and "beauty" being the essential word of art or poetry, we might substitute accordingly. The oracle would then assert, "Poetry is science, science poetry." It would be particularly exhilarating to proclaim them one if there were a strong suspicion that they were at odds (as the assertion that "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world" is really a *counter*-assertion to doubts about God's existence and suspicions that much is wrong). It was the dialectical opposition between the "aesthetic" and the "practical," with "poetry" on one side and utility (business and applied science) on the other that was being ecstatically denied. The *relief* in this denial was grounded in the romantic philosophy itself, a philosophy which gave strong recognition to precisely the *contrast* between "beauty" and "truth."

Perhaps we might put it this way: If the oracle were to have been uttered in the first stanza of the poem rather than the last, its phrasing proper to that place would have been: "Beauty is *not* truth, truth *not* beauty." The five stanzas of successive transformation were necessary for the romantic philosophy of a romantic poet to transcend itself (raising its romanticism to a new order, or new dimension). An abolishing of romanticism through romanticism! (To transcend romanticism through romanticism is, when all is over, to restore in one way what is removed in another.)

But to the poem, step by step through the five stanzas.

As a "way in," we begin with the sweeping periodic sentence that, before the stanza is over, has swiftly but imperceptibly been transmuted in quality from the periodic to the breathless, a cross between interrogation and exclamation:

> Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
> Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
> Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
> A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Even the last quick outcries retain somewhat the quality of the periodic structure with which the stanza began. The final line introduces the subject of "pipes and timbrels," which is developed and then surpassed in Stanza II:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

If we had only the first stanza of this Ode, and were speculating upon it from the standpoint of motivation, we could detect there tentative indications of two motivational levels. For the lines express a doubt whether the figures on the urn are "deities or mortals"—and the motives of gods are of a different order from the motives of men. This bare hint of such a possibility emerges with something of certainty in the second stanza's development of the "pipes and timbrels" theme. For we explicitly consider a contrast between body and mind (in the contrast between "heard melodies," addressed "to the sensual ear," and "ditties of no tone," addressed "to the spirit").

Also, of course, the notion of inaudible sound brings us into the region of the mystic oxymoron (the term in rhetoric for "the figure in which an epithet of a contrary significance is added to a word: e.g., *cruel kindness; laborious idleness*"). And it clearly suggests a concern with the level of motives-behind-motives, as with the paradox of the prime mover that is itself at rest, being the unmoved ground of all motion and action. Here the poet whose sounds are the richest in our language is meditating upon *absolute* sound, the *essence* of sound, which would be soundless as the prime mover is motionless, or as the "principle" of sweetness would not be sweet, having transcended sweetness, or as the sub-atomic particles of the sun are each, in their isolate purity, said to be devoid of temperature.

Contrast Keats's unheard melodies with those of Shelley:

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Here the futuristic Shelley is anticipating retrospection; he is looking forward to looking back. The form of thought is naturalistic and temporalistic in terms of *past* and *future*. But the form of thought in Keats is mystical, in terms of an *eternal present*. The Ode is striving to move beyond the region of becoming into the realm of *being*. (This is another way of saying that we are here concerned with two levels of motivation.)

In the last four lines of the second stanza, the state of immediacy is conveyed by a development peculiarly Keatsian. I refer not simply to translation into terms of the erotic, but rather to a quality of *suspension* in the erotic imagery, defining an eternal prolongation of the state just prior to fulfilment—not exactly arrested ecstasy, but rather an arrested pre-ecstasy.[1]

Suppose that we had but this one poem by Keats, and knew nothing of its author or its period, so that we could treat it only in itself, as a series of internal transformations to be studied in their development from a certain point, and without reference to any motives outside the Ode. Under such conditions, I think, we should require no further observations to characterize (from the standpoint of symbolic action) the main argument in the second stanza. We might go on to make an infinity of observations about the details of the stanza; but as regards major deployments we should deem it enough to note that the theme of "pipes and timbrels" is developed by the use of mystic oxymoron, and then surpassed (or given a development-atop-the-development) by the stressing of erotic imagery (that had been ambiguously adumbrated in the references to "maidens loth" and "mad pursuit" of Stanza I). And we could note the quality of *incipience* in this imagery, its state of arrest not at fulfilment, but at the point just prior to fulfilment.

Add, now, our knowledge of the poem's place as an enactment in a particular cultural scene, and we likewise note in this second stanza a variant of the identification between death and sexual love that was so typical of 19th-century romanticism and was to attain its musical monument in the Wagnerian *Liebestod*. On a purely dialectical basis, to die in love would be to be born to love (the lovers dying as individual identities that they might be transformed into a common identity). Adding historical factors, one can note the part that capitalist individualism plays in sharpening this consummation (since a property structure that heightens the sense of individual identity would thus make it more imperiously a "death" for the individual to take on the new identity made by a union of two). We can thus see why the love-death equation would be particularly representative of a romanticism that was the reflex of business.

Fortunately, the relation between private property and the love-death equation is attested on unimpeachable authority, concerning the

1. Mr. G. Wilson Knight, in *The Starlit Dome*, refers to "that recurring tendency in Keats to image a poised form, a stillness suggesting motion, what might be called a 'tiptoe effect."

effect of consumption and consummation in a "mutual flame":

> So between them love did shine,
> That the turtle saw his right
> Flaming in the phoenix' sight;
> Either was the other's mine.
>
> Property was thus appall'd,
> That the self was not the same;
> Single nature's double name
> Neither two nor one was called.

The addition of fire to the equation, with its pun on sexual burning, moves us from purely dialectical considerations into psychological ones. In the lines of Shakespeare, fire is the third term, the ground term for the other two (the synthesis that ends the lovers' roles as thesis and antithesis). Less obviously, the same movement from the purely dialectical to the psychological is implicit in any imagery of a *dying* or a *falling* in common, which when woven with sexual imagery signalizes a "transcendent" sexual consummation. The figure appears in a lover's compliment when Keats writes to Fanny Brawne, thus:

> I never knew before, what such a love as you have made me feel, was; I did not believe in it; my Fancy was afraid of it lest it should burn me up. But if you will fully love me, though there may be some fire, 'twill not be more than we can bear when moistened and bedewed with pleasures.

Our primary concern is to follow the transformations of the poem itself. But to understand its full nature as a symbolic act, we should use whatever knowledge is available. In the case of Keats, not only do we know the place of this poem in his work and its time, but also we have material to guide our speculations as regards correlations between poem and poet. I grant that such speculations interfere with the symmetry of criticism as a game. (Criticism as a game is best to watch, I guess, when one confines himself to the single unit, and reports on its movements like a radio commentator broadcasting the blow-by-blow description of a prizefight.) But linguistic analysis has opened up new possibilities in the correlating of producer and product—and these concerns have such important bearing upon matters of culture and conduct in general that no sheer conventions or ideals of criticism should be allowed to interfere with their development.

From what we know of Keats's illness, with the peculiar inclination to erotic imaginings that accompany its fever (as with the writings of D. H. Lawrence) we can glimpse a particular bodily motive expanding and intensifying the lyric state in Keats's case. Whatever the intense *activity* of his thoughts, there was the material *pathos* of his physical condition. Whatever transformations of mind or body he experienced, his illness was there as a kind of constitutional substrate, whereby all aspects of the illness would be imbued with their derivation from a common ground (the phthisic fever thus being at one with the phthisic chill, for whatever the clear contrast between fever and chill, they are but modes of the same illness, the common underlying substance).

The correlation between the state of agitation in the poems and the physical condition of the poet is made quite clear in the poignant letters Keats wrote during his last illness. In 1819 he complains that he is "scarcely content to write the best verses for the fever they leave behind." And he continues: "I want to compose without this fever." But a few months later he confesses, "I am recommended not even to read poetry, much less write it." Or: "I must say that for 6 Months before I was taken ill I had not passed a tranquil day. Either that gloom overspre[a]d me or I was suffering under some passionate feeling, or if I turn'd to versify that exacerbated the poison of either sensation." Keats was "like a sick eagle looking at the sky," as he wrote of his mortality in a kindred poem, "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles."

But though the poet's body was a *patient*, the poet's mind was an *agent*. Thus, as a practitioner of poetry, he could *use* his fever, even perhaps encouraging, though not deliberately, esthetic habits that, in making for the perfection of his lines, would exact payment in the ravages of his body (somewhat as Hart Crane could write poetry only by modes of living that made for the cessation of his poetry and so led to his dissolution).

Speaking of agents, patients, and action here, we might pause to glance back over the centuries thus: in the Aristotelian grammar of motives, action has its reciprocal in passion, hence *passion* is the property of a *patient*. But by the Christian paradox, (which made the martyr's action identical with his passion, as the accounts of the martyrs were called both Acts and Passionals) *patience* is the property of a moral *agent*. And this Christian view, as secularized in the philosophy of romanticism, with its stress upon creativeness, leads us to the possibility of a bodily suffering redeemed by a poetic act.

In the third stanza, the central stanza of the Ode (hence properly the fulcrum of its swing) we see the two motives, the action and the passion, in the process of being separated. The possibility raised in the first stanza (which was dubious whether the level of motives was to be human or divine), and developed in the second stanza (which contrasts the "sensual" and the "spirit"), becomes definitive in Stanza III:

> Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
> Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
> And, happy melodist, unwearied,
> For ever piping songs for ever new;
> More happy love! more happy, happy love!
> For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
> For ever panting, and for ever young;
> All breathing human passion far above,
> That leaves a heart a high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
> A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

The poem as a whole makes permanent, or fixes in a state of arrest, a peculiar agitation. But within this fixity, by the nature of poetry as a progressive medium, there must be development. Hence, the agitation that is maintained throughout (as a mood absolutized so that it fills the

entire universe of discourse) will at the same time undergo internal transformations. In the third stanza, these are manifested as a clear division into two distinct and contrasted realms. There is a transcendental fever, which is felicitous, divinely above "all breathing human passion." And this "leaves" the other level, the level of earthly fever, "a burning forehead and a parching tongue." From the bodily fever, which is a passion, and malign, there has split off a spiritual activity, a wholly benign aspect of the total agitation.

Clearly, a movement has been finished. The poem must, if it is well-formed, take a new direction, growing out of and surpassing the curve that has by now been clearly established by the successive stages from "Is there the possibility of two motivational levels?" through "there are two motivational levels" to "the 'active' motivational level 'leaves' the 'passive' level."

Prophesying, with the inestimable advantage that goes with having looked ahead, what should we expect the new direction to be? First, let us survey the situation. Originally, before the two strands of the fever had been definitely drawn apart, the bodily passion could serve as the scene or ground of the spiritual action. But at the end of the third stanza, we abandon the level of bodily passion. The action is "far above" the passion, it "leaves" the fever. What then would this transcendent act require, to complete it?

It would require a scene of the same quality as itself. An act and a scene belong together. The nature of the one must be a fit with the nature of the other. (I like to call this the "act-scene ratio," or "dramatic ratio.") Hence, the act having now transcended its bodily setting, it will require, as its new setting, a transcendent scene. Hence, prophesying *post eventum*, we should ask that, in Stanza IV, the poem *embody* the transcendental act by endowing it with an appropriate scene.

There is a passage in *Hamlet* that well illustrates the "act-scene ratio." When Hamlet is about to follow the ghost, Horatio warns:

> What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
> Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
> That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
> And there assume some other horrible form,
> Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
> And draw you into madness? think of it;
> The very place puts toys of desperation,
> Without more motive, into every brain
> That looks so many fathoms to the sea
> And hears it roar beneath.

In the last four lines of this speech, Horatio is saying that a scene itself might be enough to provide a man with a motive for an act as desperate and absolute as suicide. This idea (of natural scene as sufficient motivation for an act) was to reappear, in many transformations, during the subsequent centuries. We find a notable variant of it in the novels of Thomas Hardy. We find less obvious variants of it in the many philosophies of materialistic science according to which behavior and develop-

ment are explained in terms of the "environmental." Theories of "geo-politics" would be a contemporary variant.

It involves primarily the law of dramatic consistency whereby the quality of the act shares the quality of the scene in which it is enacted (the synecdochic relation of container and thing contained). Its grandest variant was in supernatural cosmogonies wherein mankind took on the attributes of gods by acting in cosmic scenes that were themselves imbued with the presence of godhead.[2]

Or we may discern the logic of the act-scene ratio behind the old controversy as to whether "God willed the good because it is good," or "the good is good because God willed it." This strictly theological controversy had political implications. For if the pattern were carried into theories of secular government, the thesis corresponding to the second of these theological doctrines might run somewhat like this: "Acts are legal because the monarch decrees them to be." Such a formula would obviously provide a much stronger sanction for legal innovation on the part of a central monarch than would a doctrine that the monarch's decrees should merely put into legal code traditional concepts of the lawful. For this theory, analogue of the doctrine that "God willed the good because it is good," served in effect to limit the powers of monarchs by upholding traditional rights that the king's legal innovations would abrogate or modify. Psychologically, you will note, the doctrine that "the good is good because God willed it" was more "voluntaristic," more in keeping with the rising bourgeois stress upon the "subjective" (the idealistic way of locating the centre of motivation in the *agent*).[3]

If even theology thus responded to the pressure for dramatic symmetry by endowing God, as the transcendent act, with a transcendent scene of like quality, we should certainly expect to find analogous tactics in this Ode. For as we have noted that the romantic passion is the secular equivalent of the Christian passion, so we may recall Coleridge's notion that poetic action itself is a "dim analogue of Creation." Keats in his way confronting the same dramatistic requirement that the theologians confronted

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2. In an article by Leo Spitzer, "*Milieu* and *Ambiance*: An Essay in Historical Semantics" (September and December 1942 numbers of *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*) one will find a wealth of material that can be read as illustrative of "dramatic ratio."

3. This stress is usually, in practice, exemplified by what I call the "lyric" or "scene-agent" ratio, involving a likeness of quality in person and place. In typical 19th-century writing one can find instances of the scene-agent ratio almost at random. Here is one in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*:

> These Arabs Mohammed was born among are certainly a notable people. Their country itself is notable; the fit habitation for such a race. Savage inaccessible rock-mountains, great grim deserts, alternating with beautiful strips of verdure: wherever water is, there is greenness, beauty; odoriferous balm shrubs, date-trees, frankincense-trees. Consider that wide waste horizon of sand, empty, silent, like a sand-sea, dividing habitable place from habitable. You are all alone there, left alone with the universe; by day a fierce sun blazing down on it with intolerable radiance; by night the great deep heaven with its stars. Such country is fit for a swift-handed, deep-hearted race of men.

n theirs, when he has arrived at his transcendent act at the end of Stanza II (that is, when the benign fever has split away from the malign bodily ounterpart, as a divorcing of spiritual action from sensual passion), he s ready in the next stanza for the imagining of a scene that would cor-espond in quality to the quality of the action as so transformed. His ourth stanza will concretize, or "materialize," the act, by dwelling upon ts appropriate ground.

> Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
> To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
> Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
> And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
> What little town, by river or sea shore,
> Or mountain built with peaceful citadel,
> Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
> And, little town, thy streets for evermore
> Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
> Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

It is a vision, as you prefer, of "death" or of "immortality." "Immor-ality," we might say, is the "good" word for "death," and must necessarily e conceived in terms of death (the necessity that Donne touches upon vhen he writes, " . . . but thinke that I / Am, by being dead, immortall"). This is why, when discussing the second stanza, I felt justified in speaking f the variations of the love-death equation, though the poem spoke not of ove and *death*, but of love *for ever*. We have a deathy-deathless scene s the corresponding ground of our transcendent act. The Urn itself, as vith the scene upon it, is not merely an immortal act in our present mortal cene; it was originally an immortal act in a mortal scene quite different. The imagery, of sacrifice, piety, silence, desolation, is that of communica-ion with the immortal or the dead.[4]

Incidentally, we might note that the return to the use of rhetorical uestions in the fourth stanza serves well, on a purely technical level, to eep our contact with the mood of the opening stanza, a music that now ut vibrates in the memory. Indeed, one even gets the impression that the orm of the rhetorical question had never been abandoned; that the poet's uestings had been couched as questions throughout. This is tonal felicity t its best, and something much like unheard tonal felicity. For the actual ersistence of the rhetorical questions through these stanzas would have

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In imagery there is no negation, or disjunction. Linguistically we can say, "this *or* that," "this, *not* that." In imagery we can but say "this *and* that," "this *with* that," "this-that," etc. Thus, imagistically considered, a commandment cannot be simply a proscription, but is also latently a provocation (a state of affairs that figures in the kind of stylistic scrupulosity and/or curiosity to which Gide's heroes have been particularly sensitive, as "thou shalt not . . ." becomes imaginatively transformed into "what would happen if . . ."). In the light of what we have said about the deathiness of immortality, and the relation between the erotic and the thought of a "dying," perhaps we might be justified in reading the last line of the great "Bright Star!" sonnet as naming states not simply alternative but also synonymous:

> And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

This use of the love-death equation is as startlingly paralleled in a letter to Fanny Brawne:

> I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could take possession of them both in the same moment.

been wearisome, whereas their return now gives us an inaudible variation, by making us feel that the exclamations in the second and third stanzas had been questions, as the questions in the first stanza had been exclamations.

But though a lyric greatly profits by so strong a sense of continuousness, or perpetuity, I am trying to stress the fact that in the fourth stanza we *come upon* something. Indeed, this fourth stanza is related to the three foregoing stanzas quite as the sestet is related to the octave in Keats's sonnet, "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer":

> Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
> And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
> Round many western islands have I been
> Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
> Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
> That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
> Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
> Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold;
>
> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

I am suggesting that, just as the sestet in this sonnet, *comes upon a scene*, so it is with the fourth stanza of the Ode. In both likewise we end on the theme of silence; and is not the Ode's reference to the thing that "not a soul can tell" quite the same in quality as the sonnet's reference to a "wild surmise"?

Thus, with the Urn as viaticum (or rather, with the *poem* as viaticum, and *in the name* of the Urn), having symbolically enacted a kind of act that transcends our mortality, we round out the process by coming to dwell upon the transcendental ground of this act. The dead world of ancient Greece, as immortalized on an Urn surviving from this period, is the vessel of this deathy-deathless ambiguity. And we have gone dialectically from the "human" to the "divine" and thence to the "ground of the divine" (here tracing in poetic imagery the kind of "dramatistic" course we have considered, on the purely conceptual plane, in the theological speculations about the "grounds" for God's creative act). Necessarily, there must be certain inadequacies in the conception of this ground, precisely because of the fact that immortality can only be conceived in terms of death. Hence the reference to the "desolate" in a scene otherwise possessing the benignity of the eternal.

The imagery of pious sacrifice, besides its fitness for such thoughts of departure as when the spiritual act splits from the sensual pathos, suggests also a bond of communication between the levels (because of its immortal character in a mortal scene). And finally, the poem, in the name of the Urn, or under the aegis of the Urn, is such a bond. For we readers, by re-enacting it in the reading, use it as a viaticum to transport us into the quality of the scene which it depicts on its face (the scene containing as a

fixity what the poem as act extends into a process). The scene *on* the Urn is really the scene *behind* the Urn; the Urn is literally the ground of this scene, but transcendentally the scene is the ground of the Urn. The Urn contains the scene out of which it arose.

We turn now to the closing stanza:

> O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
> Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
> With forest branches and the trodden weed;
> Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
> As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
> When old age shall this generation waste,
> Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
> Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
> 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

In the third stanza we were at a moment of heat, emphatically sharing an imagery of loves "panting" and "for ever warm" that was, in the transcendental order, companionate to "a burning forehead, and a parching tongue" in the order of the passions. But in the last stanza, as signalized in the marmorean utterance, "Cold Pastoral!" we have gone from transcendental fever to transcendental chill. Perhaps, were we to complete our exegesis, we should need reference to some physical step from phthisic fever to phthisic chill, that we might detect here a final correlation between bodily passion and mental action. In any event we may note that, the mental action having departed from the bodily passion, the change from fever to chill is not a sufferance. For, as only the *benign* aspects of the fever had been left after the split, so it is a wholly benign chill on which the poem ends.[5]

I wonder whether anyone can read the reference to "brede of marble men and maidens overwrought" without thinking of "breed" for "brede" and "excited" for "overwrought." (Both expressions would thus merge notions of sexuality and craftsmanship, the erotic and the poetic.) As for the designating of the Urn as an "Attitude," it fits in admirably with our stress upon symbolic action. For an attitude is an arrested, or incipient *act*—not just an *object*, or *thing*.

Yeats, in *A Vision*, speaks of "the diagrams in Law's *Boehme*, where one lifts a paper to discover both the human entrails and the starry heavens." This equating of the deeply without and the deeply within (as also with Kant's famous remark) might well be remembered when we think of the sky that stout Cortez saw in Keats's sonnet. It is an internal sky, attained through meditations induced by the reading of a book. And so the oracle, whereby truth and beauty are proclaimed as one, would seem to

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[5] In a letter to Fanny Brawne, Keats touches upon the fever-chill contrast in a passage that also touches upon the love-death equation, though here the chill figures in an untransfigured state:

> I fear that I am too prudent for a dying kind of Lover. Yet, there is a great difference between going off in warm blood like Romeo; and making one's exit like a frog in a frost.

derive from a profound inwardness.

Otherwise, without these introductory mysteries, "truth" and "beauty" were at odds. For whereas "beauty" had its fulfilment in romantic poetry, "truth" was coming to have its fulfillment in science, technological accuracy, accountancy, statistics, actuarial tables, and the like. Hence, without benefit of the rites which one enacts in a sympathetic reading of the Ode (rites that remove the discussion to a different level), the enjoyment of "beauty" would involve an esthetic kind of awareness radically in conflict with the kind of awareness deriving from the practical "truth." And as regards the tactics of the poem, this conflict would seem to be solved by "estheticizing" the true rather than by "verifying" the beautiful.

Earlier in our essay, we suggested reading "poetry" for "beauty" and "science" for "truth," with the oracle deriving its *liberating* quality from the fact that it is uttered at a time when the poem has taken us to a level where earthly contradictions do not operate. But we might also, in purely conceptual terms, attain a level where "poetry" and "science" cease to be at odds; namely: by translating the two terms into the "grammar" that lies behind them. That is: we could generalize the term "poetry" by widening it to the point where we could substitute for it the term "act." And we could widen "science" to the point where we could substitute "scene." Thus we have:

"beauty"	equals	"poetry"	equals	"act"
"truth"	equals	"science"	equals	"scene"

We would equate "beauty" with "act," because it is not merely a decorative thing, but an assertion, an affirmative, a creation, hence in the fullest sense an act. And we would equate "truth" or "science" with the "scenic" because science is a knowledge of *what is*—and *all that is* comprises the over-all universal *scene*. Our corresponding transcendence, then, got by "translation" into purely grammatical terms, would be: "Act is scene, scene act." We have got to this point by a kind of purely conceptual transformation that would correspond, I think, to the transformations of imagery leading to the oracle in the Ode.

"Act is scene, scene act." Unfortunately, I must break the symmetry a little. For poetry, as conceived in idealism (romanticism) could not quite be equated with *act*, but rather with *attitude*. For idealistic philosophies, with their stress upon the subjective, place primary stress upon the *agent* (the individual, the ego, the will, etc.). It was medieval scholasticism that placed primary stress upon the *act*. And in the Ode the Urn (which is the vessel or representative of poetry) is called an "attitude," which is not outright an act, but an incipient or arrested act, a *state of mind*, the property of an *agent*. Keats, in calling the Urn an attitude, is *personifying* it. Or we might use the italicizing resources of dialectic by saying that for Keats, beauty (poetry) was not so much "the *act* of an agent" as it was "the act of an *agent*."

Perhaps we can re-enforce this interpretation by examining kindred strategies in Yeats, whose poetry similarly derives from idealistic, romantic sources. Indeed, as we have noted elsewhere,[6] Yeats's vision of immortality in his Byzantium poems but carries one step further the Keatsian identification with the Grecian Urn:

> Once out of nature I shall never take
> My bodily form from any natural thing,
> But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
> Of hammered gold and gold enamelling . . .

Here certainly the poet envisions immortality as "esthetically" as Keats. For he will have mortality as a golden bird, a fabricated thing, a work of Grecian goldsmiths. Here we go in the same direction as the "overwrought" Urn, but farther along in that direction.

The ending of Yeats's poem, "Among School Children," helps us to make still clearer the idealistic stress upon agent:

> Labour is blossoming or dancing where
> The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
> Nor beauty torn out of its own despair,
> Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
> O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
> Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
> O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
> How can we know the dancer from the dance?

Here the chestnut tree (as personified agent) is the ground of unity or continuity for all its scenic manifestations; and with the agent (dancer) is merged the act (dance). True, we seem to have here a commingling of act, scene, and agent, all three. Yet it is the *agent* that is "foremost among the equals." Both Yeats and Keats, of course, were much more "dramatistic" in their thinking than romantic poets generally, who usually center their efforts upon the translation of *scene* into terms of *agent* (as the materialistic science that was the dialectical counterpart of romantic idealism preferred conversely to translate *agent* into terms of *scene*, or in other words, to treat "consciousness" in terms of "matter," the "mental" in terms of the "physical," "people" in terms of "environment").

To review briefly: The poem begins with an ambiguous fever which in the course of the further development is "separated out," splitting into a bodily fever and a spiritual counterpart. The bodily passion is the malign aspect of the fever, the mental action its benign aspect. In the course of the development, the malign passion is transcended and the benign active partner, the intellectual exhilaration, takes over. At the beginning, where the two aspects were ambiguously one, the bodily passion would be the "scene" of the mental action (the "objective symptoms" of the body would be paralleled by the "subjective symptoms" of the mind, the bodily state thus being the other or ground of the mental state). But as the two become separated out, the mental action transcends the bodily passion.

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6. "On Motivation in Yeats" (*The Southern Review*, Winter 1942).

It becomes an act in its own right, making discoveries and assertions not grounded in the bodily passion. And this quality of action, in transcending the merely physical symptoms of the fever, would thus require a different ground or scene, one more suited in quality to the quality of the transcendent act.

The transcendent act is concretized, or "materialized," in the vision of the "immortal" scene, the reference in Stanza IV to the original scene of the Urn, the "heavenly" scene of a dead, or immortal, Greece (the scene in which the Urn was originally enacted and which is also fixed on its face). To indicate the internality of this vision, we referred to a passage in Yeats relating the "depths" of the sky without to the depths of the mind within; and we showed a similar pattern in Keats's account of the vision that followed his reading of Chapman's Homer. We suggested that the poet is here coming upon a new internal sky, through identification with the Urn as act, the same sky that he came upon through identification with the enactments of Chapman's translation.

This transcendent scene is the level at which the earthly laws of contradiction no longer prevail. Hence, in the terms of this scene, he can proclaim the unity of truth and beauty (of science and art), a proclamation which he needs to make precisely because here was the basic split responsible for the romantic agitation (in both poetic and philosophic idealism). That is, it was gratifying to have the oracle proclaim the unity of poetry and science because the values of technology and business were causing them to be at odds. And from the perspective of a "higher level" (the perspective of a deed or immortal scene transcending the world of temporal contradictions) the split could be proclaimed once more a unity.

At this point, at this stage of exaltation, the fever has been replaced by chill. But the bodily passion has completely dropped out of account. All is now mental action. Hence, the chill (as in the ecstatic exclamation, "Cold Pastoral!") is proclaimed only in its benign aspect.

We may contrast this discussion with explanations such as a materialist of the Kretschmer school might offer. I refer to accounts of motivation that might treat disease as cause and poem as effect. In such accounts, the disease would not be "passive," but wholly active; and what we have called the mental action would be wholly passive, hardly more than an epiphenomenon, a mere symptom of the disease quite as are the fever and the chill themselves. Such accounts would give us no conception of the essential matter here, the intense linguistic activity.

HOWARD BLAKE:
These Questions for Balance

for Eleanor Blake Warren

I The Matter

Speak, deploy the vein and all the vein
Can spell and all the vein must act because
The brain demands. Speak granite that will still
Sense of wrought peninsula, speak till words
Breathe and foment within their given flesh.

So was said:
These pilgrims who skin sound kneecaps
Before Cipher, would smother self (each thing breeds tears)
Before white virgin have never known this
Nor can ever know the varimetal eyes
That tinkle Cipher's death

(There is a canyon where
Sunset is full shackled until time
And spatial acrobatics fall asleep
And I would never see it, never need it,
Never witness that torment of sunset trapped
In stone.)
No Word is ever spoken now,
And Life which gave its life is, now, without
Its Life.

Bleed this,
O blazing dark, render this face a flower
That never wilts, nor ever can be known,
Nor hoods a meaning which discretive bone
Exiles beyond boy hands that must clutch scent.

II Times and Now

Perhaps we lost much, lost myopia
Which swaddled dad in clouds.
No sacrament
Of swords, no chitchats trek between taciturn
Far stars (effluvia of Emanuel
The Swede's goodneighbor Heaven), no mohair,
No hot tea where assured vowels float
In sure security that, somehow, words were more
Than trellised bridges fainter than an air
Which wisps its fingers everywhere around

But never can be that thing which it meets.

Their outset brawn, hope, faith.

The longest date is narrow or too wide
For marrow to compute deracinate
Hope.
So, without hope, we turn and weld the head
To mountains seen as marvels, named, the Caesar:
The bounty of a mountain can be caught
By fingers aching from that exercise
Of snatching odours which will float away.
The mountain, the clear boulder, sun or night . . .
If night bruit cannons to augment itself
The young snagged hands will shiver to the song,
For sun and mountain married in the mind.

Believer Guillaume Postel (where, where have you been
These so seasand years) believed green world
Grew clean, that skulls grew holy, year by year,
Unless his God broke love and motors men
Had worked, unless good God
Tagged their good no good to It.

Heart is thirsty for a thousand hemispheres,
Too drowsy or too castrate to discern.
In this bleak season (when the bone is pinned
To ground and stars, before the urgent eye,
Flaunt certitude of far immaculate)
Our throats, through the loam drain which is this hour,
Erupt small sound. We are rinsed into that sewer
Where friends learn men are equal, hills are neither
Cyclops nor Titanias, but are
Cast into that stature which thought carves.
We cry to What, and What can bud no word.
We raise an arm, and What watches us?
We mold in jail, half lost before we were:
And like a rock beneath whose burden lies
The enigmatic worm that atrophies,
We have small will to rouse, we have no brain to rise.
Nor can the stars rejoin to speech where blood
Is frozen by a pain that knows no let.

The dad is dead. The answer that is ours
May be the certainty that answers are
But splinters in space floating on this view.

III The Substitution

Can I propose (although I know no Christ)
That you should pray as Paul and Peter prayed.

Silence shoots here while wind begets white pearl
So precious, without spot, which, without God,
Becomes God.
And the thighs and the hot lush
We bruise with steel lips that seek the goal
In damp red, and the blush of the hard nipple
On hard breasts
(The crown is chaste, the bust, a nunnery)
And the devouring, the swarmlocusts of that breath
Which, in bone penthouse where ghosts float, asserts
That love's young dream will find fog incarnate,
These substitutions rear the subsequent inane.

Paul and Peter prayed,
not to a trolleycar,
Late and corroding onward down tar space,
But to a What, a flash their minds would mold
In lieu of lips, of our procrastinate peak.

No doubt the nothing stuffed us full at birth
With aptitude for forms to fill our craw,
With need for bricks to build just any wall . . .
Clothes on a bakelite gargoyle rife with vacuum.

To set glint muscle stretching for the one
Who may glisten where cicadas drone till night . . .
O want . . . want . . .
(Deaf echoes
Break our bland hermaphrodite.)
Where the beloved, the salve to close these boils.
To pray as Paul and Peter. Peter . . .

IV The Politic Slant

We eye the fat men. We have heard
Old magpie chatter when the oriole was cold:
An avatar of cinnabar and halls
Where queen and huntress might stay chaste and fair.
We must hear the jackals breaking cellar panes
For divers fat men fattened on the lithe
Pounds of beef their elders lopped with minimum of blood.

There is cloud, and leaf, and garbage, and top time
Which (crack) confute outsides who understood
Rockbottom is brotherhood.

Nor may the fat men go. Nor may the fat men stay.
Their emeralds, their sofa silence brings
Song through the night: blonde cadences from now
(Which have, in times, poured bottles of the sky

That dust might sprout to mud
And clods might wrench and rise towards blue and light)
Must somehow breathe and spurt
To speak the sterling breath.

Some say: all is changed more than wax under the seal,
That glittering elements compel a novel shine,
That timber pinning rots, that steel must serve,
That sun is withdrawn from the fat flesh
And the high arm must be broken.
We have trudged to the treasuries of snow,
Have primed the silo of our hail,
We have stored love against this year of shellshock,
Against this necessary rape
Of the sequestrated emerald
Locked in the private, columned chamber of the bloated.

If blood were never vapour, if hairs were parallel,
If amity tied fingers to chill tractor,
If flakes of light were fed to every shirt
Then the luminous pulse never need stoop for
The nighttime drumming through grease shirts down there.

We must have light to prove our room is wired
Although no armchairs woo us to that wall
From which the foliate Paul, the rocky Peter call.

V To Work, As Most Men Work

They are not iron who break the hills that feet
May jog towards an implacable mirage
Which will be loam for some, full paraclete
For one who is no nearer iron.
This after age
Which grants no space for dressed kaleidoscope,
Which has mislaid the Mary, which can devise
No passport for Democritus or me . . .
Steel, and the force of bulbs' ambiguous juice,
TENDERIZED IS MODERNIZED, GET WHAT
THE BOSS IS READING.
Files must always be
On tap for inundation of white flutter
That augurs quick parthenogenesis of tone.

This Isabel, whose eyes being turned to steel
Would sooner cry a flame than weep a tear;
These ribbons routing intellection's drive
Until days drummer invocate the surge
Which is sonorous hammers on wet shingle!

And does this silence cry. Sound blood does gush,
Talks, as it falls, and asks them, Why is this?
They, with their nails, would scrape away our blood.
The more they scrape, the more spilled blood blotch is.
Too many dead sounds.
O grader, that a lawn
Should never slope, should catch no solitude
From sun and picnics of contingency.

This must go by:
tympani skyscrapers
Flatten green words that whisper of the me
And of absurd firs which ply photographers
On the days when Paul and Peter should preach to blasted ears.

VI And, Finally

Blank earth is all before us. Neither sleep
Nor answer creeps into the room
Where we have, with such quiet, gone to scratch
Incarcerate mists that will let sun motes in.

Now is the hour of improvising mud.
Our shack is never dry, our hand is out
That Richard may redeem our sepulchre.
The worm is on the skin, the shirt is dust:
And if the skin, the shirt must once assume
(For apathy will blanch a second in defense)
An ancient whole, the worm, the dust will come
Again to sign the second's quixotry.
The days are swifter than hysteric piston,
Are breathed in blunt hope.

We would believe in a Paul's or Peter's Christ
Were wind and skull not crushed with too much air.
The sky is high: long thoughts of a long black
Have circumscribed each eager panacea.
We have no Christ, unless to live alone
Beneath the salient covert of these hairs
Where Caesar and the Anabaptists jostle
Immanent Joe Praz for the rapt hair's ear.
Tomorrow and yesterday . . . our brother, you bastard,
Fodder for strong zooms of apt interment.

This retch is seed dropped from delivered spores
Which, too long, have fought to scalp our tented need.
We sketch Himalayas where our fathers seemed content
To arbitrate with thighs and heart and towers.
Give us, O Cipher,

(Though, surely, I know that there is no thing there)
Give us a let from sores, from wings that find
Wings of small use when loam is in no place:
Give us some peace we think our fathers knew.

The questions, the balance, O Harmodius,
(The dark is cocktail to concupiscence
And science that freeze taut fingers with ice glare)
Have made a twilight of insatiate sense,
Have given silence audience, have inscribed
Aloof arkana on chameleon air.

LeGARDE S. DOUGHTY:

Night, Big-Little City

He saw the slow gurgle down the bath-tub drain
Swallow the headline dust from the bulge of his thumb,
And the sweat of news from his back, and the sinew strain;
Saw it gulp *The Journal* itself, and a round of rum,
And the rest of reality clear out of his brain.
The towel about his shoulders turned to a cloud,
And his cool self speared up through it to great elevation.
He moved, almost without motion, to his window and bowed
Gratuitously down on all creation.
The night's first milk-man, tinkling his milk-white bells,
Swung from behind his percheron's milk-white rump.
The night's last toper, slung out *Pat Connell's,*
Stooped at the gutter to salvage a claro stump.
The cop loosed a notch at his barrel-girth of pants,
Belched the surplus of a handout wedge of pie.
A black cat arched its sumptuous arrogance,
Aslant, cylindric, sly,
Around the contour of a power pole.
The newspaperman looked down with tranquil eye,
Imperturbable soul.
And he said, without saying, for only his spirit said:
"I know at last what the shaggy poets mean
Whenever they say it's good to be serene.
. . . . . I am serene."

When the steely fire sirens slit the air,
And sunset rose due north at three o'clock,
And mice turned into men on the thoroughfare,

Breaking the still deadlock,
He did not feel a nerve-spark touch his lean,
Long frame or stir the cool line of a hair.
He had learned like the shaggy bards to be serene,
And did not care.

In a window suddenly crammed by a 60-watt globe,
She was more than naked, being somewhat less than nude.
The poets fizzled out of his best brain-lobe.
Serenity stumbled flat into solitude.
She simply walked by the sill, then turned about—
Didn't do a thing but walk by the window ledge
And back from edge to edge,
Then the lovely rhythm was lost in a snap blackout.
His knuckles doubled white and his face burned red.
He had to say something—and this time the whole man said:
"Goddam"
And he fell like a tropic storm into bed.

HAROLD NORSE:

The Tankers

The gunmount flashes, flashing metal grey
Also the opaque aft, as down the harbor
Estuary under steam toward turquoise streams
She plies. And dagger-eyed the gull veers overhead

Catching a splinter of sunlight on a glassy feather.
There in the danger-polluted currents
Punctuated by periscopes in a grammar of death
Another tanker bears another patriotic gift,

The gift of fuel, to light the faltering wick
That flutters in the pulse of Europe
Whom monstrous quilts of smoke consume:

And cargo of sleep for children's eyes
And for the pregnant the gift of a clear sky—

Trade winds sweep through the crow's nest
Bearing no whisper yet, no mutter
Of peril but distance, fear but far
Gulf heaven whose birds spangle with light;

And outward they travel, living centre of power,
Vortex of possibility a match could splay
Smithereened, spate upon such clearness of coast:

Yet the spirit of sailors dares the paths
In voyage of fire without fear: as the conscious prowler,
Subaqueous and sly, waits under weather
Camouflaged as creature, waits in the sea and rain

Drawing a circumference of patience round the moving centre.
But still the image of face without body
Has no knack of daunting the will of boys
Who sprint laughing along the devious catwalk

In the golden air, and consider only the laugh
And not the eventuality. And the earth
Behind their monumental trip broadens
With the laugh, whose echo winds through pain,
In hills where their people have no choice.

Five Voices

One way outward from all terror is
to drink:

and after the cuirasso and the gin
the task of morning, incumbent to begin;
the zinc-white fact, the gyroscopic day
requires level eyes. This is no way.

One way outward from dilemna is
to think:

waking at night, who have drowned in self,
estuary of decisions and fauna of contradiction,
at the flaring brink of thinking your thoughts
like heat bubbles float out of sleep, hissing as they wake.

One way outward from an endless cycle is
to compromise:

your hair grows sparse and still you stare
at early photographs with a helpless care;
what do they say: adjust yourself: be sure
to shift towards comfort; keep from being poor.

One way outward from impending failure is
to grow wise:

what more egregious comfort to the weak
than power of encompassing the shadow of death?
And this is wisdom: for not only the sanctified
but you, who take the coldness of no flesh at your side.

There is no way outward for the broken self
but dying:

and all the rest is lying, lying.
I know that these killed sophistries persist
like razor returning to the coward wrist
too bare for the flashing edge, the turgid twist.

BREWSTER GHISELIN:
Men Together

The two men were driving in a roadster north on the highway that runs close to the sea along the southern California coast. Though it was late on the last afternoon in December, the air washing through the open car felt almost tepid. The sky was strangely coppered, as if behind the massed and strewn clouds the grass of a prairie was afire.

"Earthquake weather," the driver of the roaster said, glancing again at the highway.

"Superstition, Jake," said the other, a sand-colored man, wiry and brisk as a terrier. He leaned to look past the driver across the cliff-edge fields.

Toward the islands along the horizon a few sharp specks of boats appeared standing still on water smooth as if leveled with a burnisher. Nearer, a small boat drawing a wake that took fire of the sun in its curling seemed turning up a furrow of tin.

"Want to get out and look, Tim?" the driver asked.

"No, no," Tim said. "Let's get there and take our time. Tide changes in a half hour."

The resort town of Balboa showed up in the sharp air ahead, and on the right the cliffs of the channel, over mudflats and sloughs. The car leaned on a curve, skimmed down a ramp to the marshes, rolled slowing along the highway shoulder of sand and shell, and stopped.

The two men got out, stripped off their jackets, and tossed them on the seat. Both wore sweat shirts, shorts, and ragged tennis shoes. Jake, a big soft man with tame brown eyes, opened the rear of the car and dragged out a gunny sack and work gloves. He held up a small cloth bag.

"Want the salt—want any octopus, Tim?"

"Let it go," Tim said. "Too hard to fix."

He turned toward the slunch of footsteps coming behind him. Two men carrying rolled blankets approached with slow, pulling strides in the roadside sand. The short dark one in the red sweater stopped a few feet away. The narrow-shouldered blond came on alone. His face was sun-flushed and there was a brickred like fever on his flat chest. Close to the men by the car he stopped; and rolling from one to the other the strained bulge of his eyeballs, he said in a husky voice, "Could you fellas give me some money to get some food? I'm sick and can't work and haven't had any food since yesterday—yesterday morning."

Tim was looking at the red spot over the dirty undershirt on the man's chest, then at the cotton trousers and grayed work shoes, and back to the face, the eyes blue like water toward the islands on a clear morn-

ing, but strangely bulged, and focused past the faces he looked toward.

"I need it," the man said.

"What do you think, Jake?"

"Whatever you say, Tim."

"Got any change on you, Jake?"

"Only a bill."

"Looks like we can't do anything for you, buddy," Tim said. "Sorry. You better ask somebody else."

The man drooped forward into his slow walk.

"Wait a minute!" Tim said. "Would you like a meal?"

The man stopped and lifted his gaze, queer-eyed and hollow-jawed. His companion drew up to the group.

"We're goin'a get some meat over there in the slough. At low tide there's all the scallops you want, just for pickin' 'em up." Tim turned to the short dark man in the sweater. "With that fryin' pan of yours we could cook 'em."

"Why sure!" Jake said. "We can give you a real meal that way."

"What's scallops?" the short dark man asked.

"Shellfish. Damn fine food," Tim said.

"Can you eat it, Rankin?"

The blond nodded. "Sounds better than nothing. I've heard of it."

"We'll try it."

"O. K. Jake, this'll take time; we better eat too. You run up to the store at the junction, will you? I'll split with you when I get home. O. K.? Get some bread and butter and something like canned beans. We'll go over and get the scallops. And bring some fruit. Wait a minute; I'll take the water bag and the axe."

The slough was a hundred yards off across filled ground pale with shells. "Not many people know this place," Tim said. "There's scallops enough for an army. But they take time to clean, so we want to work fast. We go right in the stream to pick them up."

"My pal here's got to keep out of water," the dark man said.

Below the dike Tim ran across five yards of sand and swung up the slope.

"Gimme a hand, will ya, Thor?" Rankin said.

Tim watched them come up the steep embankment.

"He's about all in," Thor said. "We come from South Laguna this morning. This here the place?

"This is it."

"How deep's that mud?"

"Oh, four five inches. Less in the channel. More up here by the rushes. You got an extra pair of shoes?"

"Hell no!" Thor said. "I'll go in barefoot."

Rankin sat on a plank fallen from a remnant of retaining wall, while Thor and Tim went out across the mud.

When Jake climbed the dike they were knee-deep in mid-channel, bent

like gleaners, dragging between them the sack drowning with a fat load. Tim straightened and shouted:

"Might's well stay there and cut some wood."

In Rankin's upturned face the closed eyes opened. "I mighta done that," he said.

"You sit and rest," Jake said.

At the solid bump of the axe against wood, birds on the mudflats scattered to the air, and the crack of the entering edge drove them higher and farther. Out on the main channel, swimming birds rose kicking and flapping along the surface, flew straight, and dropped skidding on water.

Thor and Tim struggled across the mud, straining the sack three quarters full between them.

"Jesus! They're thick out there today!" Tim said. "We could've had twice as many but we picked the big ones."

"Pretty quick work," Jake said.

"Thor's faster'n anybody I ever saw."

"It's only them big hands." Thor held one up. "I can take four or five at a reach."

Tim tipped a stream of muddy dark shells on to a patch of weed at the edge of solid ground. "One of you boys got another knife?"

Thor opened a three-inch blade whetted thin and bright.

"Gimme it," Rankin said, "and you go wash the mud outa that cut."

"Hell, you sure got messed up," Jake said. "I'll pour you a little water."

"Let me take the knife," Rankin said, and stooped beside Tim.

"You slip it in right here and hold the point high to cut the muscle close to the top of the shell," Tim explained. "Then you got a sort of dish with the lid off. You peel back the body from the base of the muscle and rip it off like this. The muscle is all we eat. Where's that pan? We'll wash these later."

"Can you eat 'em raw?"

"Can if the water's safe. I don' know. I wouldn't."

"I'll try some," Rankin said.

"Wash it then. And put some salt on it. Say, Jake! You bring the salt?"

"Never thought of it! I'll go get it when we finish with this foot."

"I don't need salt," Rankin said.

Jake poured water from the bag over the creamy bits of meat in Rankin's hand.

"How's it taste? Sort of flat?"

Rankin nodded. "It's real food though."

"Good for you that way if it don't kill you," Tim called.

Rankin stooped over the heap of shells. Thor took the axe, and Jake began building a tepee of kindling above a lighted paper bag. The fire stood like a candle flame on the brown paper, then moved up and into the kindling, flowed about it, and rose fluttering. The four men watched it

brightening, pulling higher. As Jake laid on heavier wood the flames embraced it. Orange fire shot up straight.

"I'll go get the salt," Jake said. "You might put on more wood in a minute." He climbed the dike and dropped to the other side.

With purling motors, the evening transport went north, moving high and fast like a migrating crane, but with still wings. "They get bigger every year, don't they?" Rankin said, watching. Thor put more wood on the reddening fire and set out the two cans of beans to heat. Shadow had begun blurring the reeds of the marshes and smoothing the mudflats. The tide flooded into hollows in the mud and lay there gleaming, quivering with the motion of its return. Tim washed the scallops in a pool of the tide and rinsed them with water from the bag. The frying pan was on the coals when Jake came over the dike.

"Say!" Jake said, "I went back to the store for spuds to roast! Thought you'd like 'em." He ripped open the bag and rolled out a dozen potatoes. "I got 'em small to cook quick. Wrap 'em in mud and paper and they won't burn." He tore the bag into squares and brought a double handful of mud to plaster the potatoes.

Rankin, watching, asked, "You care if I start with a piece of that bread?"

"Sure, sure, take it! Tim, these guys are starved! Let's get the spuds in." With a split stick he raked craters in the coals. Tim dropped a wrapped potato into each and Thor covered them over. Rankin knelt by the fire, chewing bread.

"Eat that slower, kid," Thor said.

Tim dropped butter into the hot pan and scattered the damp scallops popping and sizzling in it, and sprinkled salt.

"Takes these about four minutes," he said.

Jake passed his pack of cigarettes, and the men squatted near the fire. The flames were gone and the coals at the margins were beginning to be dusted with ash. Twilight seemed unchanging on the marshes, but the tide was rising: the sloughs were wider, and the birds stepping on wire stilts through the shallow pools were nearer. They sprang into blurring flight as Tim rose and the arc of his tossed cigarette stopped on black mud.

"I got some plates, Tim," Jake said. "Cardboard plates."

"Put 'em out and dish some beans, will you?"

Tim stirred the scallops to a rich spluttering and poured them on the four plates. "Come and get it," he said. "I'll put on more."

While the starved began eating, Jake punched the coals and laid on wood. Burning, it darkened the twilight. The smell of woodsmoke and frying increased.

"Good food!" Rankin said, speaking past his fingers. In the rising firelight his eyes gleamed like glass marbles.

"Take it easy, kid," Thor said.

Twenty minutes later they raked the last potato from the coals

Rankin strewed it thick with salt, as the butter was long gone, and ate it hurriedly. Thor sat watching him. He polished an apple between his palms, and biting, chipped off a crisp disk, and chewed.

"Where you boys go from here?" Tim asked him.

"North."

"Where to?"

"Up the highway."

"You keep on the move."

"Sure. Never stay in one place. People wouldn't stand for it."

"Find any work?"

"Odd jobs. Once in a long while. My pal hasn't worked since spring. He picks up more money than I do, though. People look at me and think, Hell, he'll last till somebody else helps him out. But the kid looks nearly as bad off as he is. Would you of fed *me*? I don't mean now. Think back."

"No, I guess that's right," Tim said.

When Rankin had tossed the thready crumble of his second apple on the coals, Jake passed cigarettes. Tim threw on the last of the wood. Its fall fanned up a whirl of sparks that reddened the men's faces—except Rankin's, which stared in matchlight behind the basket of his bony hands. As the sticks puffed into light, the evening blackened in around the group.

Thor leaned back, shaped a jet of smoke with his lower lip, and said, "Mighty white of you guys."

"No," Jake said, "you oughtn't to say that. We know what you're up against."

"Forget it," Tim said.

"We may get ours some time," Jake added.

"What do you guys work at?" Thor asked.

"I paint houses," Tim said. He looked at Jake. "He just waits for a little cash he gets the first of the month."

"Aunt's annuity," Jake said. "I live with her and put the garbage out twice a week. Pretty soft."

Thor laughed. "Hell's fire! It's a livin', anyway."

Rankin got up slowly and stood looking at the fire. Then he dropped his cigarette and, hiccuping, stumbled off beside the embankment.

"Christ!" Thor said without moving.

Ten yards away Rankin stopped suddenly and began a jerking animal coughing.

"There goes all that food," Thor said. "He'll do that sometimes . . . too bad he's not a dog!"

Tim laughed.

"What's wrong with him?" Jake asked.

"Don't know. He's all shot. Ought to be in a hospital."

"You think the meat was too rich for him?"

"Can't never tell about him."

"Maybe he'd eat some later."

"He might tomorrow."

"You take all that's left, if you want."

Thor stood up. "I'll fill this bandana. It's the most we can carry. I got to carry everything for a while." He stooped and fumbled among the shells.

"Pick clean ones," Tim advised him. "They're lighter."

Rankin came back to sit by the fire. Jake gave him a cigarette. Holding it, he steadied his fingers across his knee, but the bright tip blurred. "Be all right soon," he said, shivering, wiping his forehead with his sleeve.

Jake took coins from his pocket and stooped, slanting his palm to the fire. "I've got thirty-eight cents left," he said. "It'll get you some soup and something or other later."

"Thanks, thanks!" Shivering as he took the money, Rankin dropped a coin in shadow at his feet.

Jake kicked the coals into light, and the men searched the ground.

"Must of rolled," Tim said.

"Which one was it? What's left?" Thor took the coins and counted. "Thirteen cents."

"It was the quarter then," Jake said.

"Probably fell in the fire," said Tim. With the axe handle he turned the coals and ash on the margin, then scattered the fire carefully to the core. He made torches of the remaining plates, the apple bag, and the waxed paper from the last piece of bread, a wafer of heel which Thor pocketed. Then the men worked over the acrid ground with the wandering flares of matches until the last stick curled and its flame sucked into a spark. The only light came from pallid jags among the clouds.

Rankin said, "We can sleep here and find it in the morning."

"Won't do any good," Tim said. "When there's real low tides there's high ones. All this will be water clear up to the dike in a couple of hours. We've tramped up the ground, and everything will be mucked up with mud and ashes tomorrow."

The men stood silent together. At last Thor said, "Might as well move on."

"We got to be goin' too," Tim said. "We're late now."

"New Year's party?"

"Yeah."

They groped up bedding, bag, and axe.

"Got to get home in time to clean up," Tim added.

As they climbed the dike, the long highway was moving with festive lights arched at the slough bridge against the neon of Balboa and Newport. Along the slough, lights were showing from shacks and tents of an auto camp.

Tim said, "Jake, we better plunge. So long, boys. And Happy New Year!"

"Good luck, fellas," Jake said.

"Thanks," Rankin said.

After an instant, Thor called after them, "Happy New Year!"
"Not for them, though," Jake murmured, hurrying beside Tim.
"Shut up," Tim told him. "Come on. Everybody'll be three drinks head. We got to drive like hell. I want to be good and dizzy when I say oodbye to this old year."

BARBARA HOWES:
Beacon Hill

"...for I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation..."

Solemnity is a good thing, as far as that goes,
But soon an anaconda ring around
The throat grows out of it, and every gust
Of laughter and huzza is cut off short.

What fear in the hearts of my ancestors so froze
Their throats that not a breath of passion wound
Through them? What flinty habit of distrust
Fired their prayers with all Hell's colours, caught

Life everywhere red-handed? By degree
Their sensibility shrank to a reserve
Deep as their forests, or ran out in trade—
Night-prowlers crouched by streams, gaunt glutted mills.

The throat soon learns to take the collar, to be
Thin and cold, the neck soon learns to curve
Forward in starched obedience, the decayed
Veins throbbing under the tightening ring, until

Love and imagination that are thrust
Below, jet forth their darkening phantasies
That hood the mind and impregnate its deep
Fissures with the vivid seeds of waste:

Excess and madness thrive where decorum lusts
After itself and lightly guarantees
Indifference—or else the quick passions leap,
Flood, hurtle, till they choke the throat to rest.

—But still the burden of this heritage
Subdues the voice that would cry out in rage.

ELISEO VIVAS:

HERBERT J. MULLER: *Science and Criticism.* Yale Univ. Press.

The fundamental objective of this book, I take it, is to furnish progressive, left-of-center but not "leftist" criticism with a broad philosophic basis. Muller thinks that a basis is to be found in "the revolutionary findings of the natural and social sciences of our day." On his interpretation, the findings of science support a philosophic view of the world which he calls "scientific humanism." The book therefore embodies two distinct, though not unrelated, efforts: it gives an account of those results of the sciences which Muller deems pertinent to criticism, and it tries to validate, on the basis of that account, Muller's own philosophy of life. About two-thirds of the book has been given over to the first task, and only the other third to the second; but I assume that the second is the more important. As Muller himself recognizes, his is "scarcely a modest aim." But if any one is, he surely is well equipped to achieve it successfully. For he brings to it a wide range of reading and interests, a high capacity for assimilating diverse subject matter and distinguished qualifications as a literary critic. The result is a book which is truly "challenging" and "stimulating" besides being, in no small measure, informative.

The importance of Muller's task can be realized only when we consider that the moderate, left-of-center critics have been much less apt to examine the general philosophic assumptions on which they operate than have their confreres to their right or to their left. True, the others have the advantage that they have their philosophies given to them ready-made. But at any rate, the result is that the work of men like T. S. Eliot or Allen Tate or even the Babbitt humanists, on the one side, or that of the Marxists on the other—for all one may bring up against it—gives the impression of resting on more solid ground than the criticism of the liberals. You may reject Eliot's philosophic assumptions but you cannot ignore the fact that the authority of an intellectually refined tradition is back of him. You may expose his inconsistencies as critic, and they are many, but you must feel that these are less important than the central vision from which his judgments spring. By contrast, contemporary liberal criticism is thin because it does not show exactly what its assumptions on which they operate than have their confreres to their right or to their left assumptions in the widest acceptation of this term.

It is no wonder that Muller should have found out that, as he points out, his scientific humanism is "essentially the philosophy of John Dewey." For it has been Dewey who has been the leader in the elaboration of the theoretical structure of contemporary liberalism. The reference to Dewey and to Muller's relations to the right and to the left, between which he stands, exempts me, I hope, from the task of giving an account of what the term "scientific humanism" refers to specifically. Those who have read his earlier volume, *Modern Fiction*, know that in his literary criticism Muller displays a liberal's catholic tolerance. In politics he seems to stand for democratic progressivism; in morals for secularism; and while recognizing the importance of religion, he denies the supernatural chiefly on pragmatic grounds. It should be noted, however, that though Muller tells us that his philosophy is "essentially" that of Dewey, one of his remarkable gifts is his ability to extract something of use for himself from a large number of disparate and incongruous points of view: from Santayana, I. A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, Thomas Mann, Karl Mannheim, Lionel Trilling, Freud, Abram Kardiner, Ruth Benedict, and many, many others.

The central question we must ask regarding Muller's scientific humanism is, of course, to what extent it is adequate. And my contention is that, arising from a fundamental fallacy, it is not adequate for the task for which it is intended. I do not mean to quarrel with details, even though some of these seem to me to be seriously defective. There is no need to argue against lapses in scholarship such as are involved, for instance, in his assertion that it was Galileo who called the objective qualities of physical bodies "primary" and the subjective "secondary." Nor is there need to bring up against the book crudities of interpretation, such as that expressed in his reference to "the unified world of the Middle Ages." Nor do we need to refer to the fact—impossible to verify or disprove, because of the lack of documentation, which itself must seriously be brought up against the work—that Muller sometimes seems to gather his ideas from popular rather than primary sources.

Any book of the range and ambitiousness of Muller's is bound to suffer from imperfections, but his do not invalidate his central conception. Nor do I want to bring up more serious matters, such as his telling us that "the first and last answer to Eddington as to Berkeley remains Dr. Johnson's kick," or his saying that the principle of the excluded middle "is refuted by life itself." The crass pragmatism of which these statements give evidence is pervasive, and constitutes a serious fault. But there is at least one other matter, which is radical, and which must therefore draw our attention.

I have in mind Muller's treatment of the topic of value, which is of course basic to his whole philosophy. Starting from Perry's definition of value as "any object of any interest," Muller fails utterly to do justice to the realistic theory of value—according to which values exist independently of desire, and are objective features of the structure of the universe. The deficiency gives itself away most clearly when we consider the strategy he uses to defend his view. For he assumes that if you do not agree with his own value theory you must identify the Rational with the Real, and, in doing so, you are "akin to neurotics and savages, who also confuse the order of their thoughts with the order of the world." Indeed, his strictures are directed at a writer who is not the best representative of the position he is attacking, C. E. M. Joad, and they ignore the really strong arguments that have been made for it by men like Nicolai Hartmann, or my colleague, A. C. Garnett, in his book *Reality and Value*. I am not saying that Hartmann's or Garnett's position is impregnable, and that those who follow the tradition of Spinoza and Perry in regard to value are in the wrong. In value theory I happen to be closer to Muller than I am to the realists. But I do say that he has not disposed of value realism, and that there is much more to be said for it than Muller seems to be aware of.

From another point of view, the weakness of his treatment of value shows itself when one asks exactly what Muller's theory of value is. Is it subjectivism or is it the theory known in contemporary philosophy as "objective relativism"? From his discussion of this problem I do not get, after careful examination, a sense that Muller is clearly aware of the radical difference that exists between these two positions. And yet, since the positions are thoroughly exclusive of one another, the consequences, for criticism and for general philosophy, of holding one or the other view, are tremendous.

But what I take to be the most serious objection to Muller's scientific humanism arises out of his uncritical belief that biology justifies the assumption that (in a sentence quoted from H. S. Jennings) "that which promotes the fullness of life is that which is the most valuable." This issue must be discussed here in some detail because, aside from being the chief fallacy in Muller's scientific humanism, it has vitiated a large number of versions of naturalistic ethics since the days of Herbert Spencer. It is found, for instance, in men like William James and I. A. Richards. In Muller it is found implicitly throughout the drift of his discussion, and explicitly in statements like the following:

> Here is the biological basis for efforts to define and establish the good life . . . That is valuable, generally, which heightens, extends, and refines consciousness, and thereby increases the significance of experience; the traditional humanistic ideal of maximum consciousness, a full, harmonious development of human faculties, is a moral expression of the biological fact of growth. Hence that is bad which cramps, blunts, distorts . . . In this view one can make out clearly the source of value in science, art, religion, philosophy, and all the interest and activities we call civilized.

and:

> [men] naturally aspire to abundance of life, fullness of being.

The error I want to examine is the belief—accounting, by the way, for the very name he gives his philosophy, "scientific humanism,"—that the system of values he espouses, and to which I shall refer under the term "ethical vitalism" follows logically from a description of biological processes. It does not. Or, what amounts to the same thing, it does no more follow from a complete description of biological processes than any other system of values does, however insane or unnatural it may seem to anyone who does not espouse it. But mark well that the quarrel is with the assertion that his system of values is derived logically from biology as against some other system. Ethical vitalism follows logically from some selected facts of biology; it follows only when one has accepted—on some ground other

than a biological one if on any at all—the secular ideals which seem to predominate unchallenged in our culture at present, to the effect that the end of life is living, living as much as possible, and here and now. That biology justifies ethical vitalism seems plausible to those who have not considered, to borrow a statement from Santayana, that there seems to be something in the very nature of things which condemns nature. Ethical vitalism follows, in other words, from a simplified and naively optimistic conception of nature, which is repudiated by as large and as deep a segment of human experience as that which backs the claims of the ethical vitalist. For nature also produces the systems of value that find embodiment in the other-worldly religions and the pessimistic philosophies, and which deny the wisdom of the ethical vitalist. Growth, expansiveness, fullness of consciousness, the grasp of secular goods, are indeed processes disclosed by natural science as of the very essence of living. And they may be legitimately called the basis of ethical vitalism. But they are only its basis by virtue of a previous selection from nature, and a previous disregard of the other processes, equally rooted in the nature of things, and equally disclosed by biology, which lead to contraction, to rejection of fullness, to denial of life, to asceticism. If some men "naturally aspire to abundance and fullness of being," some others have just as naturally aspired to the very opposite, and if our culture blinds us to their aspirations it may be our moral loss and it certainly is a source of logical confusion. So that an ascetic, life-denying morality is as much "justified" by nature and by the natural sciences that describe nature's processes, as is ethical vitalism. But notice that the "justification" that science furnishes us with is not an ethical justification. It consists only in pointing out that the causes that make any given individual or group prefer a system of values. But other systems also have causes from which they spring. Mark well therefore that the ethical vitalist cannot dispose of the other-worldly or ascetic values by calling them the expression of disease, since the term begs the issue; no more than he can dispose of them by talking about failure of nerve or nonsense of that sort. For if the term "disease" is a purely biological one, it can refer only to a natural condition, though of course those who value life and health find that condition objectionable; and if the term implies an evaluation, it assumes already the very criterion of value which we are trying to educe from biology. Nor can we even say that men naturally reject a diseased condition, since the statement just is not true, as is easily shown by the fact that ascetic, or life-denying, systems of value have at least as much enduring power and have fulfilled as important a function in history as the yea-saying philosophies of ethical vitalism.

My criticism of Muller then boils down to this: his effort to ground his humanism on science is fallacious. The developments of science, important as they have been and probably will continue to be to our culture for all sorts of reasons, have put us no nearer to the resolution of the basic moral problem of humanity—the problem of the justification of the ends of living—than men ever were before. Science may have changed what Herbert Spencer would have called the "physioscopy" of our culture. It has sharpened the old tools of knowledge and perhaps forged new ones. But no one has yet managed to show that it is able to justify the new ends and objectives which our brave new world has chosen to substitute for the ends of our Christian ancestors. Otherwise put, my criticism is that the term "scientific humanism" is at best a slogan covering up a confusion which, if I interpret the purpose of Muller's book correctly, it should have been one of his fundamental jobs to elucidate. This is not to suggest a defense of asceticism as against the ethical vitalism of Muller. The question as to which of these two is a better philosophy of life is not here at issue. And it is a pity, for I would like to say something on the stupid worship of living which I see around me. Nor is it to belittle the real merits of Muller's book. These are many and important, as I tried to point out at the beginning of my review. But it certainly is to say that liberal criticism is still as much in need of a philosophical foundation as it was before the publication of this book. However, if for no other reason and there are many others, this book is significant because it draws attention forcefully to the need to furnish liberal criticism with a philosophical foundation, thus preventing it from muddling through on the crutches of hand-to-mouth pragmatism, as it has been doing to date.

DAVID DAICHES:

LIONEL TRILLING: *E. M. Forster.* New Directions.

A literary critic has at least two primary tasks. He must *demonstrate* the work under discussion, so that when we look at it again we see more clearly not only what it is but where we must stand if we are to observe it as it is; and he must also provide for the work a context that makes possible fruitful and suggestive comparison. Proper analysis and proper comparison are both necessary: if I had to choose between them (and I hope I never shall) I would choose the latter, provided it were really well done. Nothing, of course, is less easy to do, or more easy to do sloppily and conventionally. But at its most profound, critical comparison can lift the scales from our eyes (and what else is the critic trying to do?) more effectively than any other kind of commentary. If one were given twenty pages in which to try to make clear the essential reality and significance of *Hamlet* and were told to restrict oneself either to "pure" analysis or to "pure" comparison, the latter, if perfectly done, would be more likely to include the former than the other way round. If the critic were able to put *Hamlet* besides *The Brothers Karamazov, Oedipus Rex, Le Rouge et le Noir* and *Phèdre* and explore all the possibilities of that frightening juxtaposition, he could achieve more than if he stuck only to the text, however intelligently.

For literature, like life, is a series of successes and failures, and of many mixtures of both; it is a series of struggles to achieve significance, each of which can only be properly assessed and interpreted if we see it beside others. The good critic is known by his choice of comparisons. One of the most fundamental questions the critic can ask himself is: Beside what other works will this work be seen most clearly for what it is?

Some such thoughts as these were in my mind as, having re-read *The Longest Journey,* I tried to justify to myself my preoccupation with the fact that it stands today as a brilliant exposé of the superficiality of *Crome Yellow* and the crudity of *The Way of All Flesh.* This thought, to be sure, gives Forster a neat historical niche: but does it represent a critical insight? Does it help us to understand Forster's novel to see its hero, Rickie, as a subtler Ernest Pontifex and a more serious Dennis (I cannot remember the name of Huxley's poor character)? I was grateful to Mr. Trilling, whose book I fortunately read right after reading *The Longest Journey,* that his remarks added point and new meaning to my impression.

This may seem a curiously egotistical way of setting about a review of Mr. Trilling's book; but the fact is that if one is to write a criticism of a book which is itself a criticism of other books, the only way to bring the discussion down to earth, and to prevent it from becoming querulous or gushing or simply unreal, is to anchor the discussion in some point which both critic and critic's critic have independently faced.

This comparison was one of the points I chose. I was struck by the fact that Forster constructed his novels largely in terms of insights which represented a transition between the militant revolt of the nineteenth-century liberals and the cynical revolt of the prematurely disillusioned generation of the 1920's. Could Mr. Trilling—I asked myself before I opened his book—give a critical meaning to that historical insight (if it was an insight)?

I will reassure the anxious reader at once: Mr. Trilling did give a critical meaning to my historical observation—at least he succeeded in giving an account of Forster's literary intentions and insights which put that observation in its proper place. Mr. Trilling is distinguished among contemporary critics for his admirable sense of European culture. He can make a pertinent observation about the Greeks or the eighteenth-century English without any trace of exhibitionism; and that is more than can be said of nine out of ten American critics. Modern critics, from Pound and Eliot on, have been far too prone to the exhibitionist use of cultural illustration, and modern readers have in turn been far too prone to encourage this vice. It is, indeed, the great vice of our time—one might go so far as to say that it is the ultimate, unforgivable Sin against the Holy Ghost of literary criticism—and has bid fair to turn one of the most important of intellectual activities into a game of musical chairs distinguished from the normal playing of that game by the fact that every odd man out finds himself a new chair of his own and sits on it pompously. Literary criticism as an honest desire to get to the guts of a problem—to face up squarely and thoughtfully to the facts and values presented by works of literature—has declined sadly since Arnold's day. Modern critics are often much cleverer than Arnold, but far less intelligent.

Mr. Trilling, perhaps on account of his own careful work on Arnold, has something of Arnold's decent respect for intelligence and for the truth. There is not a trace of showmanship in his work. The only reason that I can think of why the reviewers have been so kind to his book on Forster is that they were misled by the opening chapter into expecting ghosts of really snappy generalizations and then didn't read any further. It is a reasoned, thoughtful, well mannered book.

It is, however, limited, as a book of this kind is bound to be. Mr. Trilling tends to

avoid the final critical issue, taking refuge in explanations. It is the most difficult thing in the world to distinguish between defects in your author's imagination and defects in your author's works: yet one is a personal judgment, the other a literary. The line of literary criticism winds continually between description and evaluation, between history and judgment. Mr. Trilling's line winds a little too much. In the last analysis what are we to say of *Howard's End* and *A Passage to India*? I do not mean one must give each book so many marks; but there is, after all, the final literary judgment to make and to substantiate. The trouble with Mr. Trilling's judgments is that too often he detects in the novels evidences of defects in the author's insight, but does not proceed to make quite clear how, why, and to what extent those personal defects are bound up with literary defects. He is too often content with extracting, explaining and criticizing the "message" of the novels, and letting the result stand as a literary judgment. But is it a literary judgment? It is a question few of us can answer clearly.

It seems to me that there are two outstanding aspects of Forster as a novelist: the first, an historical aspect, is that fact that his hero stands midway between Butler's Ernest and Huxley's Dennis; the second, a literary aspect, is that he has a constant tendency to confuse myth and symbol. As I use the terms, myth in literature is the use of some external (but accessible) pattern in the light of which the pattern of the literary work takes on its full meaning; whereas symbol is what character and event become in the light of the parts they play and the positions they take up in the plot. Now this confusion between myth and symbol—which is responsible for Forster's peculiar charm as well as for his failure to achieve "greatness"—may be causally connected with the first aspect of his work; it may have something to do with the psychological problems peculiar to a sensitive writer of Forster's time and place. Any number of comparisons suggest themselves. One thinks of Yeats's alternation between symbolism and mythology, of Eliot's search for a storehouse of symbols, of Huxley's bewilderment when the old symbols lost meaning—in other words, I am suggesting that Forster's limitation can be linked to one of the main problems confronting modern intelligence. But the explanation that makes that link clear is historical, whereas the demonstration of the qualities themselves is critical. The final end of critical discussion is to enable the valuative to emerge and stand apart from the descriptive. But in Mr. Trilling's book they remain embedded in each other.

This is rigorous criticism—perhaps unfair criticism, for I am not sure that the ideal I am desiderating could ever be wholly achieved. But in the presence of Mr. Trilling's work it is proper to be exacting, to hold up the ideal ruthlessly. Mr. Trilling uses comparisons excellently, and he is capable of shrewd analysis. His talents demand that we insist on the most adequate synthesis of insights of which he is capable. Of such a critic we demand more than first-rate diagnosis: we demand the ultimate transition from diagnostic to critical statements, in which the latter are nevertheless so closely related to the former that the unwary reader can never see at what point the transition takes place.

JAMES LAUGHLIN:

ROBERT PENN WARREN: *At Heaven's Gate.* Harcourt, Brace

JERRY VOORHIS: *Out of Debt, Out of Danger.* Devin, Adair

Here are two books of much importance, at first glance unrelated, actually two sides of the same coin, both striking hard and with skill. One, Warren's novel, is a work of art a book to which I think the word *literature* can be applied with honesty; the other, Congressman Voorhis' exposition of what is wrong with the American money system, is strong job of popular propagandizing in the best of causes. The connection is this: Warren's villain, the character who dominates and motivates his whole structure, is precisely the private banker who would be eradicated by Voorhis' reforms. Thus we have the politician telling us in straight talk what is wrong with our economic set-up, and the novelist showing us a compelling picture of how the economic corruption affects real life. It is powerful combination. It should make an impact on the tragic obliviousness to this crucial subject—the anti-social role of private banking in a democracy which is (at times) politically but never economically democratic.

I'm sure that Warren did not realize he was writing an economic tract. Perhaps he has never heard of Voorhis and the principles he stands for. What Warren did was to look at a typical Southern city and write what he saw: banker's cancer spreading through the social body and causing the degeneration of everything it touches. Of course, *At Heaven's Gate* is much more than mere reporting. It has architecture—an extremely interesting double narrative running in a kind of counterpoint. It has plot and moves with pace. It might make a fine motion picture in the hands of a European director. Hollywood, naturally, wouldn't touch it with a stick. It has style—many pages of solid and moving writing. It has poetry—the narrative of the hillbilly holyman, written in mountain dialect,

full of extraordinarily beautiful bits of folk poetry invention. Don't skip these sections: here for once is dialect which really sounds real, studded with marvelous nuggets of linguistic ore. Above all, Warren knows how people act. In situation after situation he delights you with the *right* solution, right in the sense that it is not the expected reaction (as Hollywood or the hack novelist gives you the normal, average response) but the irrational response which is artistically right. It strikes me that this book, which people will compare with Dos Passos' *Number One* and with Faulkner, is better than either. And when you begin to put it beside Warren's poems and his work on the *Southern Review* the total adds up to a literary figure with few peers on the present scene.

Jerry Voorhis represents a district in southern California but is not a crank or a phoney. Washington reporters voted him the "hardest worker" in the House. Most people who take the trouble to study our money system find that it is an outmoded farce, but few of them want to buck the status quo because of the rewards the system offers to exceptional or lucky individuals as it stands. But Voorhis is not afraid to expose the fallacies of a system which exploits a basic national right and resource—society's credit—for private benefit. Soldiers enduring warfare and wondering what good their effort is going to bring them can be thankful for Voorhis; he knows the score and seems to have the energy and sagacity not to be easily disposed of by the interests he attacks.

Both of these books are being maltreated. The so-called "liberal" weeklies have ignored Voorhis' book; they are dependent on the banks and want butter on their bread. Warren's novel has been smeared in most of the big reviewing media as a "dirty" book: no mention of its splendid qualities, just a dirty book. Sure enough, Warren writes about life as it is, but he does it with skill, dignity and veracity, and, unlike Faulkner and Caldwell, he doesn't simply show the evil, but gives the full picture of where the infection starts and how the pus runs. And God knows it is running hard and fast and had better be stopped.

MARGEDANT PETERS:

NEW POEMS 1943, edited by Oscar Williams. Howell, Soskin.

The yearly anthology, such as Oscar Williams has been compiling for the past three years, is a kind of way station between magazine publication and "permanent" anthologizing. It has the same justification as a periodical for not being a simultaneous success in all directions, for naturally all of the best is not available in any one such brief period. Actually Mr. Williams does not confine his selections to the poems of a year; he goes as far back as 1938 to include a poem of Frederic Prokosch's from *New Verse.*) But having the disarming limitations of a periodical, it is also, like a single issue of a periodical, ephemeral. The question which each reader must decide for himself is whether he wishes to buy such a book in order to have Mr. Williams keep him *au courant.*

Most of the best-known poets writing these days are included. The contents in order read: Aiken, Auden, Barker, Berryman, Blackmur, Brinnin, Comfort, Cummings, Derwood (Gene), Eberhart, Empson, Frost, etc. Of course any reader will make his own objections to the selections, satisfactory as they are on the whole. I, for one, could do with less of Dunstan Thompson and Robert Lowell, for example, and can think of several young poets I should like to see included. The eight poems by Cummings are not as good as other of his recent works which have been in his best lyric vein. Mr. Williams chose these apparently because they had not been published at the time (though they appeared recently in *View*); this is not a good enough reason for an anthologist. Curiously enough, this is the first time Mr. Williams has included Cummings in his collection.

Other poems among those listed as heretofore unpublished stand as valuable inclusions. I count among these John Malcolm Brinnin's, Muriel Rukeyser's "Who in One Lifetime," and Mark Van Doren's "Down World."

As to whether or not this is an anthology of war poetry, one wishes that Mr. Williams had never brought the matter up. There is some war poetry here, some of it fine and probably lasting, such as Karl Shapiro's "Nostalgia." A poem for all civilians is Marianne Moore's "In Distrust of Merits," because of its incisive honesty. But Mr. Williams in his introduction fights over the familiar field of the relation of the poet to ideas in his time and points out again the ridiculousness of expecting a great production of poems suitable for patriotic occasions. He concludes his essay with this bit of nimble pleading: "They write, not of the movement of troops, the horror of the enemy or the mechanism of the tank, but of the state of the human organism in the emotion of now living. But because the poet is sensitive in a stolid environment, our kind of society is hostile to him. The poet is thus always at war. Each poem included here is a 'war poem,' doing its bit, it seems to me, in the struggle towards the only victory worth having: the victory of understanding, the victory of art by the mere fact of its existence."

This seems to me to be catching the bandwagon by the tailgate in a most undignified way.

It is an attempt to give a blanket warrant to all poets, no matter what they are doing by an appeal to the general values of art. But art cannot be vital necessity unless our poets and artists make it so. Those who are wrapped up in this private and picayune "war" Mr. Williams speaks of cannot also fill the role of leaders of thought which he ascribes to them. It is my feeling that many of the poets in this collection are not dealing with the great themes of our times or even engaging in a search for them. Too much of this poetry is precious, lacking in humanity, and even in gusto. It is difficult for Mr. Williams to make a case for his contributors as the prophets, the seers, the builders, when so many of them are merely sitting in the corner making Weave-its.

HOWARD NUTT:

KENNETH FEARING: *Afternoon of a Pawnbroker.* Harcourt, Brace

Afternoon of a Pawnbroker is a book of blunt satire and ironic situation, the kind of book we have come to expect from Kenneth Fearing, a book of strong song. The characters are those who have always attracted him—Billy the Bicep Boy, the corner druggist, Martin Dies, a crystal-gazer from Miami Beach, John Doe, Pa, Ma, "strangers, stragglers, a miscellaneous crowd." Perhaps no other American poet has written so consistently about the people he dislikes. And Fearing is a man of great hate. He makes sport with the incongrous and the inane. He shuffles the deck of slogans and clichés, and declares a misdeal. He does this with an idiom which is native and natural, with an ease of writing that comes when writing is real fun.

Compactness is not one of Fearing's virtues, and several of his pieces seem to stop rather than conclude. He is sometimes prodigal with his figures, as though unable to decide which is the most appropriate. However, the point is got across, his case is proved. In many of these poems there is an undertone of wistfulness hardly noticeable in his earlier collections.

Fearing is one of the poets who have borne up under these times. He still writes, and as well as ever. He is one of those, it appears, who have accepted this war, as he once said, "as a part of normal life . . . a nuisance along with heat waves and community boresses."

CHARLES SHATTUCK:

EUDORA WELTY: *The Wide Net.* Harcourt, Brace.

The signature of Miss Welty's latest stories is the hoof-mark of Pan. Pan is Mr. Doc McInnis of "Asphodel," who steps out naked from vine leaves to frighten three picnicking old maids, and whose little goats pursue them; he is Cash the Negro field hand capering in the road, splendid for Easter, with a guinea pig in his pocket, waltzing Livvie from the deathbed of her husband; he is Billy Floyd, abrupt and secret as a woodland animal, luring Miss Jenny from The Landing. In "A Still Moment," John James Audubon approaching lightly out of the wilderness to stand in silence beside Lorenzo Dow, saver of souls, and James Murrell, destroyer of men, is Pan beside Christ and Satan. Even "The Wide Net," in this company, becomes a rampage of satyrs. This Pan is no kin to the whimsical, discreetly-furred, pathetic fellow that used to be heard tootling so prettily from the hedgerows: he is a genuine avatar of the old nature-spirit of Arcadia, sensual and frightening— and no doubt about the sex.

The symbol furnishes exactly Miss Welty's now dominant concern to describe the disintegration of our old social and ethical forms under stress of the amoral forces of nature—a theme expressed in *The Robber Bridegroom* by the closing in of the Indians. The stories that participate in the symbol most are the best, deriving from it meaning and structure. "First Love," without satyr-motif, seems to be a still-birth, the breath of fine phrasing powerless to animate the body (the conspiracy of Aaron Burr). "The Winds" is mainly an amassing of childhood memories, a waste of good things in a profuse storylessness.

Of the Pan group, "At the Landing" is perhaps the least satisfying; though the fable is first-rate, it is sunk deep in yearning rhetorical attempts to weigh the gossamer human feeling, is somewhat too "piercing sweet by the river." "The Wide Net," a prize story, is already famous for its fine texture of scene and action; "A Still Moment" should become so for its ideas. My own favorites are "Livvie" and, especially, "Asphodel." the stiff-brocade development of "Asphodel" (the maiden ladies' three-part recital of the life of Miss Sabina), the explosive turn-about (Mr. Don buck-naked in the sun), and the wonderful acceleration of the goat-chase that brings the ladies home, here more surely than in any of the others theme and style become the symbol, and the symbol, creating the fable, rises dramatically from the page.